



Despite extreme poverty and persecution that have followed Jews to wherever they dispersed across the continents, their unity has remained unbroken. The forces of evil do not attack just a part of the Jewish population, but all Jewish people.

Only our international support organisations can protect us, especially OSE which plays a major role.

Let us never forget their considerable rescue operations which saved thousands of Jewish children from Nazi barbarism and enabled them to lead a normal life.

Let us thankfully remember these men and women who developed and implemented international assistance programmes.

Actively participating in current and future missions is the best way to prove our gratitude.

© OSE Fund

Excerpt of Albert Einstein's letter to Israël Weksler, representative of the OSE committee in New York, March 1953. Hebrew University of Jerusalem Fund



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OSE

1912-2012

100 YEARS OF HISTORY



*Jean-François Guthmann
Chairman of OSE France*

1st cover :
Berlin, 1926. OSE poster promoting the creation of a new healthy Jewish generation.
YIVO Fund

Celebrating OSE's 100th anniversary since its founding on 28 October 1912 by Jewish doctors from Saint Petersburg means speaking about the tragic history and the heroism of Jewish people during this dreadful century. It also means speaking about the major role played by OSE in rescuing children in France and Europe. In North Africa the association shared in the glory but also the decline of Jewish communities in Morocco and Tunisia. In addition, it lent support to children during their travels to the United States and Israel.

During its history OSE was more often steadfast than wavering, its leitmotif threading through the years from 1912 up until today, conveying the same human values from Saint Petersburg to Paris. This is why distinguished men and women have honoured the association with their presence and unflinching support. Everyone obviously knows the honorary president of Union-OSE, Albert Einstein, but do people know for example that Marc Chagall and historian Simon Dubnov took part in establishing OSE children's homes in Vitebsk and Vilnius? Or that the sculptor Aronson funded an OSE house in Latvia? Upon its arrival in France, the association received support by great doctors such as Professor Bedsredka of the Institut Pasteur and neuropsychiatrist Eugène Minkowski, politicians such as Senator Justin Godard and more recently, Simone Veil and Elie Wiesel.

Sprung from the tumultuous events of the 20th century, OSE has honoured its original mission while forging itself a powerful tradition. A social welfare organisation endowed with a mission but also a code of ethics and adapting to the needs of the era, OSE invested efforts to assist refugees, perform underground operations, support orphans and rebuild families. In the diversity of these initiatives shines forth an ever-constant moral aspiration: correct the malfunctions in the system and limit the damage to the psyche of deprived children by giving them back their identity.

Celebrating OSE's 100th anniversary means making these outstanding men and women at the centre of our history known, while focusing on the present and also future cooperation to come.

1912-1922



Russia, 1903.
Creating a healthy
new Jewish generation:
receipt of a medical
prescription written
by Dr Shapiro.
YIVO Fund

OSE, a medico-social NGO for Jews

1912-1922

OZE in Russia and in the Pale of Settlement

October 1912 Founding and objectives

In August 1912, the Russian Ministry of the Interior authorised the founding of the *Society for the Protection of the Health of Jews (Obshtshestvo Zdravookraney Evre – OZE)* in Saint Petersburg.

This surprising authorisation came amidst the collapse of the Tsarist Empire and relative liberalisation, following the anti-revolutionary and “patriotic” pogroms of 1905 and the violent anti-Jew campaign set off by the Beilis affair involving a Jew accused of murder who was eventually acquitted. Moreover, the founding of OZE coincided with the assertion of an autonomous Jewish cultural movement. During its first general meeting which brought together more than 200 people on 28 October 1912, the association elected its leading members¹.

These were doctors and activists from associations, who came from Russian organisations for the health of the poor such as the powerful *Pigorovski*, from which OZE drew inspiration in its early years.

OZE’s primary objective was to implement a modern health system for Jews who were excluded from the Russian medico-social protection system. Unlike traditional charity structures, OZE had a

global vision with regard to health protection: provide assistance and care for Jews, cure them by determining the exact causes of illness, anticipate by acting upon the health of young people, and prevent illness through massive distribution of hygiene rules and awareness-raising campaigns. OZE’s medical project for the poor, which fit into the larger framework for the autonomous management of Jews, sparked debate and went against the principles of the Jewish social democratic party which did not incorporate medicine in its Jewish cultural independence programme. The association’s positions were widely debated: was the creation of a medical and health association specific to Jews well-founded? Should the health problems of Jews be set apart?

OZE found itself at the crossroads between the populist movement *narodnik*, the hygiene movement of the beginning of the century (physical regeneration of people) and the different Jewish political democratic movements – Bundists, Zionists and internationalists. Advocating a non-political stance, the association rallied representatives of the Jewish liberal bourgeoisie.

1912–1922

1912-1914

Improving the health of five million Russian Jews

By drawing on existing community organisations such as the Jewish hospital, as well as skilled scientists, and attracting the widest circles of the population, OZE set up committees in all of Russia's large cities. Community clinics, child centres called *Gouttes de lait* (well-baby clinics), children's homes and sports centres also came to being. Between 1912 and 1914, training programmes for paediatricians were launched in 102 cities and 22 provinces, as well as beginners' courses on the rules of medicine, hygiene and health. During the same period, works targeted at the general public and brochures in Yiddish on these same subjects were published. Cleanliness weeks and days were organised by the different sections of OZE with the very support of school children. The association expanded across the Empire's Pale of Settlement, especially in Poland and Lithuania. Public baths were built in Warsaw, Kaunas, Chisinau and Balti as well as community laundries as in Vilnius. Toiletries – soap, toothbrushes and toothpaste – were distributed free of charge or at a reduced price.

1914-1916

Adapting to emergency situations

The First World War forced OZE to reconsider its priorities and take care of injured people and refugees.

As from July 1914 and during the Russian retreat of 1915 and the Minsk pogrom, OZE put mobile medical teams in place to follow Jews who were displaced or evacuated from the front line.

Thousands of people suspected of pro-German sympathies were chased from the Duchy of Courland and the Kovno region by trainloads in freight wagons. Others wandered on the roads without food, shelter, or basic healthcare, at the mercy of the dreaded Tsarist army.

Heeding the call of organisations such as OZE, the *Organisation through Rehabilitation and Training* (ORT) and the *Jewish Committee for Helping Victims of the War* (EKOPO), groups of young Jews watched over the populations, administering first aid and drawing up reports on pogrom victims for Jewish deputies of the *Douma*.

In large cities such as Saint Petersburg, Smolensk, Minsk and also Vitebsk, assistance committees facilitated the creation of soup kitchens, quarantine facilities for people with contagious diseases, public baths and disinfection centres.

1917-1922

Revolution and consequences

At the time of the October revolution, OZE operations were in full swing with 700 qualified staff – doctors, medical and social nurses and teachers.

From the time Jews attained civil, political and national rights in April 1917, OZE enhanced its support and assistance to children. In summer 1917, the association managed 13 camps with 2,500 children and 40 day camps to welcome 15,000 children. However, due to increasing turmoil in the country's interior, OZE's operations became more difficult to organise.

1918-1919

Progressive loss of autonomy

In 1919, the Jewish communities were dissolved as were all of their administrative arms. However, organisations such as OZE, ORT and EKOPO still conducted their operations until 1922 when they were fully nationalised by the Bolsheviks. OZE chose to carry on its activities through *Nansen*, an international committee for refugees, then through Joint, in Ukraine and in the Kharkov, Odessa and Kherson regions where there were thousands of refugees, until all of their equipment was nationalised. The Agro-Joint-OZE society was founded to assist the Jewish agricultural colonies in Russia.

1921

Pogroms in Belarus

Before leaving Russia, OZE took action during the pogroms in Belarus in July 1921. The association provided food, clothing and medicines to Jewish people, through an emergency assistance division sent specifically to Belarus. A mobile team was charged with taking care of children affected by the pogroms and placing them in children's homes located in the Minsk province in Oyezd.

1922

Fighting against famine

In 1922, while OZE was about to be expelled from Russia, Dr Gran came to Paris seeking funding and to make OZE known, by emphasising the miserable living conditions of Jews who were faced with a new misfortune: famine. OZE set up ambulances with diet kitchens for young children. Each ambulance was able to perform 1,500 consultations per month and provide 1,500 food rations for children.

1922-1923

Development of OZE

As early as 1922, leaders endeavoured to spread the foundations of their organisation to central and eastern Europe. Branches with their own health institutions were created in countries that had become independent following the Brest-Litovsk Treaty of March 1918, i.e. Lithuania, Bessarabia, the Baltic States and especially Poland, where the association adopted the name *Towarzystwo Ochrony Zdrowia* (TOZ). Relations with the Jewish communities of Western Europe and America laid the foundations of the Union-OSE.

1923 – 1933

Union of OSE societies *Organisatio Sanitaris Ebraica*

At the Berlin congress in August 1923, the federation called the *Union of societies for the protection of Jewish health*, coordinated the different branches of OSE, organised into national groups. Lazare Gurvic was elected Secretary². Albert Einstein was appointed Honorary President until his death.

Henceforth, OSE's programme attained an international dimension, since, according to the terms of the congress resolution "...[OSE] must extend its activities to all places where there is a high number of Jews and where the internal and external conditions of their existence require measures to be taken to improve their physical condition."

OSE committees in Berlin, Danzig, London and New York

In Berlin, in the *Scheunen* district, OSE assisted the 30,000 destitute Jewish refugees from Poland and Russia, by setting up free medical consultations, a day camp for children and conferences to promote hygiene.

In 1922, the Berlin committee decided to open a division of OZE in Danzig to organise medical care for all the refugees fleeing Bolshevik Russia.

In September 1923, the Jewish Health Organisation in Great Britain which was the OSE division in London was created with the support of renowned doctors to assist the central committee to find material for the central and eastern European divisions.

Apart from the collection of funds in England, the London committee³ began to work in the Jewish district of *Whitechapel* organising education conferences for the poor, brochures, medical surveillance services in *Talmud Torahs* and healthcare centres for deficient children.

In 1925, an OSE delegation comprising three members of its central committee⁴ travelled to America to promote OZE's work and enhance assistance from Jewish Americans. Through the creation of a local American committee⁵, ties with the *Joint* were strengthened.

1924-1930

Development in Eastern Europe

Medico-social work initiatives funded by the *Joint* continued in all the regions of central and eastern Europe: 61 divisions in Poland including in Vilnius and 14 in Lithuania. The *S. Frumkin* nursing home in Kovno, inaugurated in 1928, became a model for other countries. This polyclinic, equipped with a large gymnasium, a playground for children given continuous educational support, shower-baths and even a hygiene museum, mirrored all of the organisation's views.

OSE was also established in Bessarabia and Bucovina which had become provinces of Romania and where a large number of refugees were located, and developed children's camps in Latvia.

OZE societies, either supported or recognised by public organisations as in Lithuania which was bereft of medical supplies, found support among the population, in view of having a certain financial independence. The Berlin committee centralised the work while seeking other funds.

1926

Joint financial campaigns with ORT

The *ORT-OZE-Emigrdirect* committee (Society for Jewish emigration) was founded with a view to launching joint fund-raising campaigns. The coordination of fundraisers in 30 countries, with the support of political and scientific personalities, obtained significant results. Local committees were set up all over the world in Scandinavian countries, South Africa, Australia and even in India and the Far East. This collaboration swept to France in the 1930s with OZE looking after the physical health of Jews, and ORT preparing their integration into economic and social life.

1929-1930

The Crisis Years

All Jewish populations in eastern Europe were stricken by poverty because they had to endure both the economic effects of the crisis and anti-Jewish campaigns. At the same time, grants from the *Joint* were cut by half and OZE's work changed direction: the association directed its full attention to children and emergency aid (distribution of food and clothing).



Berlin, 1926.
OSE poster
promoting
breast-feeding.
OSE Fund

1933 – 1939



Montmorency, 1939. Ernst Papanek and children of the *Villa Helvetia*.
OSE Fund

Establishment In France

Subject to the harassment and bans of the Nazi regime, the headquarters in Berlin was transferred to Paris. There was nothing about France to suggest that it would become a sphere of action for OSE, neither its health situation nor the social and legal situation of Jews. But the swarm of refugees arriving from Germany caused new problems.

End August 1933, Union-OSE was officially declared at the Paris police headquarters. Lazare Gurvic remained Secretary of the association and Alexandre Besredka became its first President. Dr Boris Tschlenoff led the Geneva branch.

The organisation was able to pursue its international work and set up in Jewish districts where most refugees had relocated.

1934

Creation of OSE France

In France, the Association became the *Œuvre de Secours aux Enfants*, (Children's Aid Society - OSE). Very early on, OSE began to assist Jewish children from Germany and Austria and introduced its first day camp in Montmorency under the auspices of Baroness Pierre de Gunzburg. 350 children benefitted from this day camp each year from 1934 to 1938.

1936

World league of Jewish doctors

The association provided assistance to persecuted doctors, especially German Jews, by setting up a special professional reintegration service in cooperation with the world league of Jewish doctors, founded in 1936 in Tel Aviv and inspired by OSE. Debates on the timeliness of the founding of such an association proved its political clear-sightedness of the dangers that were to come.

November 1938

Consequences of the Kristallnacht

Young German Jews, arriving in ever-increasing numbers in Strasburg after the *Kristallnacht* were given assistance by Andrée Salomon who contacted OSE on this occasion. She led the social service office until 1947.

January 1939

The first children's homes

Faced with the influx of children in need, OSE rented the *Villa Helvetia* in Montmorency and divided 283 children into four houses managed by Ernst Papanek and his team. The group's disparity made teaching very difficult.

Just before the war, OSE was the only association that had experience with children's homes and with staff versed in social work. It owned a whole network of homes that continued to grow: 4, then 11 homes, lodging 1,600 children before 1940, and up to 25 homes at the time of Liberation.

1939 – 1944



France, 1939-1944. Infants born in the Gurs internment camp.
OSE Fund

The rescue of Jewish children

With war declared in September 1939, OSE's programme took on a new dimension. It was no longer a question of only protecting German and Austrian children who had become "enemy aliens" but also organising the evacuation of children from Paris and the surrounding area to protect them from bombings, welcoming the refugees and adapting social assistance to the country's social situation. The children were placed in the Chabannes, Chaumont, Masgelier and Montintin castles in the Creuse and Haute-Vienne departments.

the placement of children. Of a total of 4,000 children in the North, 600 were rescued.

1941-1942 *Aid initiatives*

The association's management department was established in Montpellier. OSE progressively opened ten medico-social centres in the main French cities to assist Jews who were destitute or who had been put under house arrest: medical consultations, social assistance, provision of clothing and food, there was no shortage of work to be done⁸.

Rescue of children from internment camps

Dr Joseph Weill, member of the Nîmes committee, was in charge of medical assistance in the internment camps and Andrée Salomon managed to rescue 500 children with the help of volunteer assistant interneess⁹. They organised the departure of 350 children to the United States in collaboration with the Quakers.

Homes for the children

Temporary shelters at the beginning of the war, the 14 homes that were either secular or of strict observance, became educational centres where educational training, vocational training in connection with ORT, recreational and sporting activities took place. Georges Loinger trained a team of monitors, organised intra-house sporting competitions and then inter-house competitions to prevent children from developing disorders due to confinement and to prepare for the future.

June 1940

OSE office in Paris

The OSE committee for the North was entrusted to Falk Walk and Eugène Minkowski. The latter who was already a member of the Rue Amelot Committee organised an underground network to rescue children with a small group of courageous women including Enéa Averbouh who was the Director of the camps and day centres⁶. The community clinic on Francs-Bourgeois street served as a legal cover⁷. Dr Irène Oppolon, equipped with false papers and set on not wearing the yellow star, escorted the children and remunerated the nannies. Other social workers performed similar activities with the help of institutional support in the Seine department. OSE worked in close collaboration with the *Jewish Scouts*, the *Women's International Zionist Organisation* (WISO), the Rue Amelot Committee and the communist *Solidarity* Movement, to organise

1939-1944

March 1942

Towards a humanitarian resistance movement

Incorporated into the *Union générale des israélites de France*, (Union of French Jews - UGIF) in the third health division at the beginning of 1942, OSE's work went progressively from philanthropic assistance to humanitarian resistance. Alsatian Jews joined the association which was all the more important given that OSE was forced to cut ties with its foreign staff at the end of 1942.

The situation was extremely different from one area to the next depending on conditions during Occupation, and awareness of the danger and the need to disperse and hide children did not become evident until after the roundup of foreign Jews on 16 and 17 July 1942 in the North and on 26 August in the South.

November 1942

Hunted

The Germans arrived in the South. The Jews left the coastal departments. OSE's movements depended on this migration. It opened centres in Limoges, Nice, Megève, Saint-Gervais and Chambéry¹⁰. In Toulouse and Pau, the teams kept watch of all surrounding departments, often in collaboration with the Scouts. In Lyon, capital of the Resistance, Doctor Lanzenberg's team¹¹ operated until Liberation and extended its operations to Grenoble¹². Gestapo raids in 1943 and 1944 were responsible for a large number of arrests including that of Madeleine Dreyfus. In all, OSE mobilised more than 25 doctors and around 50 assistants.

OSE management headed by Joseph Millner

and Valentine Cremer, both French, withdrew to Vic-sur-Cère, then in the Italian zone in Chambéry. It worked with the Union-OSE office which was independent of UGIF, and especially with OSE Geneva which redistributed money from the *Joint* needed to fund its operations.

Spring-summer 1943

Establishment of the Garel Network

After the famous *Nuit de Vénissieux* of August 1942 during which 108 children were rescued from deportation, Joseph Weill called on Georges Garel, a French Jewish engineer connected with the *Combat* network to organise an underground network to assist children. Despite countless difficulties, the network, covering four large regions of the South (with the exception of the area surrounding Nice which was entrusted to the *Marcel* network) was operational in summer 1943. The definitive close of the homes however, took more than one year. Each region functioned independently managed by a regional head¹³.

From his base in Lyon, Georges Garel coordinated all the regions, organised the technical infrastructure (false papers, clothing and escort) and managed all communications with partner organisations. Always on the move, he made political decisions, visited the regions, brought money and stood in the way of arrests. Thanks to his personal contact with Monsignor Saliège, Archbishop of Toulouse and that of his network's Jewish and non-Jewish assistants, families, convents and boarding schools were willing to welcome children whose identities had previously been changed and whose ties with their parents had been cut. All of France's population categories mobilised through associations such as the

Cimade (which provided assistance and support to people uprooted by war), protestant pastors led by Marc Boegner and French priest Glasberg's *Amitiés Chrétiennes*.

By the time of Liberation, 2,400 children had been saved (1,600 children with non-distinctive Jewish features for the A network and 800 children with distinctive features for the B network led by Andrée Salomon).

1943-1944

Passage to Switzerland

Passage to Switzerland began in April 1943, following negotiations with Swiss authorities for the entry of children on their own. Several smugglers working directly under OSE's orders were engaged for this purpose. Jenny Masour and Robert Job along with the heads of the homes selected children who were particularly in danger, and sent them to new homes in the Italian zone, Moutiers-Salins and Saint-Paul en Chablais, or in groups of six to ten to Switzerland. In August, the number of transfers increased following the evacuation of the Saint-Gervais and Megève centres used for house arrest.

After September 1943 with the flood of Germans in the Italian zone, operations became more difficult. The organisation of passage to Switzerland was entrusted to Georges Loinger¹⁴. Following successive arrests, the transfer of children was more or less stopped from November 1943 to March 1944, date at which it restarted at a more frantic pace, jointly organised by OSE, *la Sixième* (the underground network of the Jewish Scouts and the *Mouvement de la jeunesse sioniste*, [Zionist Youth Movement - MJS]).

February 1944

Going underground

The arrest of Alain Mosse and all the members of the OSE-UGIF office in Chambéry forced the organisation to go completely underground. It decided to close the last remaining children's homes and all the centres and offices. Management continued to work through periodic meetings in Lyon, at René Borel's home and in the wagons of stationary trains.

Summer 1944

Départ pour la Palestine

A group of children left for Spain to board the *Guinée* ship to take them to Eretz Israel.

1944 – 1954

Reconstructing

September 1944

The Lyon charter

The Liberation of France took place progressively. After the bombings came the settling of scores, cries of joy intermingled with the nerve-racking wait for the return of loved ones. Everyone had the impression of being miraculously saved.

On 25 September 1944, OSE members met to define the general policy directions, keep a united team and re-establish contact with the Paris branch. Emerging from the war was no easy task. Everything had to be reconstructed and difficult priorities had to be set. Constructing an authentic aid structure for children and also meeting the needs of Jewish families in distress were the immediate objectives.

The OSE-France association, declared on 13 June 1945 and approved by the state by the decree of 14 September 1951, amended in 1954, reasserted its mission to support the health of Jewish populations.

Provide shelter to children

Upon the liberation of French territory, OSE progressively reopened old homes and set up new ones when the need and opportunity arose. The Montintin, Masgelier and Saint-Paul-en-Chablais homes used during the war were chosen as accommodation and triage centres, while waiting to be given a definitive purpose. The pace at which these homes were opened as well as their number show the magnitude of the task given to Marc Schiffmann: first 13, then 25 homes between September 1944 and the end of 1945 to welcome thousands of children. Recovering children who were hidden in families and institutions and giving them back their own identity took priority. It was also necessary

to locate the parents, find which children were left on their own and obtain guardianship. After Liberation, social workers combed the departments on bicycle in search of children. From 1948, OSE took part in different screening committees funded by the *Joint* to find children who had not been reclaimed. Makeup classes also had to be organised quickly for those who were to pursue studies. The homes in the provinces that were too isolated were left behind for homes in Paris and the surrounding area. The smallest were in Meudon, the largest, in Vésinet. Girls were placed in Saint-Germain, then at Draveil. The most religious children were sent to Taverny and Versailles. In 1949 there were about a dozen homes left.

Which education? The “OSE minimum”

“Children are the centre of our concerns, children as they are now, but also the adults they will become later on. Without an image of tomorrow’s adults, we are unable to raise the children that are in our care.”

(*Nous*, OSE teaching and professional guidance bulletin, April 1945).

The 1946 teaching congress set out the major guidelines: an atmosphere as similar as possible to that of the family and the original environment, a neutral curriculum, but one which honours collective Jewish identity to let each personality develop fully. It all seemed clear, but what a debate was sparked!

The “OSE minimum” varied. Culture, religion, Jewish atmosphere: OSE’s plurality banished any type of set framework. Some houses identified more with traditional Judaism, whilst others more resembled liberal Judaism. What was important was knowing that they were Jews. This diversity, which was never refuted, was responsible for the richness and the success of the OSE model.

Reassert its health mission

Medico-social centres were established in all the large cities of the provinces and dealt with emergencies: reception of deported persons, providing the essentials, financial assistance, packages, clothing, bedding, and professional reintegration in connection with ORT.

June 1945

Welcoming the children of Buchenwald

On 11 April 1945, American soldiers were surprised to discover around a thousand children in Buchenwald. France accepted to welcome 426 of them, provided that OSE handled the entire operation. At the beginning of June 1945, they left the camp for France.

On 6 June 1945, OSE accommodated the boys who had come from Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, in the preventorium of Ecois, which was an interim location made available to the association by the French government. This was where they became known as the “children of Buchenwald”. Some of them spent only a short while in Ecois before leaving for Palestine. When the preventorium was closed, 17 of them had found family ties in France and 33 were placed in foster homes. The others were sent to Ambloy, then Taverny, the home on Rollin Street, Moissac and children’s homes.

Of the 426 boys who came to France, about a score of them stayed and applied for French nationality. The other children of Buchenwald were dispersed over the five continents.



Ecois, 1946.
Israël Meir Lau,
future Ashkenazic
Chief Rabbi of Israel,
on his way to
Palestine.
Private Fund

1946 – 1960



France, 1946. Young OSE girl on her way to the United States.
OSE Fund

Development and decline of World Union-OSE

The immediate post-war period

Branches were opened throughout the world with priorities depending on events. The priority in 1946 was still Europe and its millions of refugees. OSE spread to all the countries in eastern Europe, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Romania. The Polish branch TOZ rose from its ashes. The following year, following various reports by Valentine Crémer and Enéa Averbough, OSE engaged in pioneer work in North Africa and in 1948 it took action for the young Jewish state.

The 1950s

Henceforth, headquarters was in Paris¹⁵, with 251 institutions in around 30 countries. Fundraising campaigns were launched in all European countries including Finland and the Netherlands as well as South Africa and Australia. New branches were set up in Latin America with the South American federation in Buenos-Aires and a new health centre was opened in Mexico.

The basic programme was the same: protection of mothers and children, fight against social diseases, specific medical activities, training of managers, scientific work and health propaganda.

At the end of the 1950s, the branches in the eastern countries were nationalised and contact was broken.

The end of the 1950 saw the expansion of World Union-OSE come to an end and a progressive decline of its branches' activities.

A few examples

Palestine then Israel

In Palestine, OSE, founded during the war, was in its early stages, without a stable headquarters before the creation of Israel. The only far-reaching initiative was the establishment of a summer camp in Kfar Sion near Jerusalem and a nursing home in Netajim, close to Richon-le-Sion. In 1945, ties were forged with France in favour of family reunification. Children including young survivors from Buchenwald left to join their family members.

Considerable efforts were made after the war of independence for children arriving from Cyprus and placed in the home in Sarona. Young injured fighters were placed in the convalescent home of Beth Berl in Naan. In an effort to improve the nutrition of children in the country, OSE distributed provisions among the poor children of cities which had not been besieged.

Mobile paediatric and dental services were transported to isolated communities, especially the *maabarots*. Health nurseries were also set up for ailing children to fight against child mortality.

Lastly, the Union-OSE took charge of the medical surveillance of European *aliya* candidates, especially in the *Grand Arénas* camp in Marseille and in *Aliyah des Jeunes* interim houses.

1946-1960

Italy: a steadfast branch

After Liberation, Raffaele Cantoni, a staunch anti-fascist, Zionist and activist of the Italian Jewish Union created a new branch of Union-OSE. This was motivated by the condition of the Jewish community and the fact that the country was a hub for Jews arriving from eastern countries. In 1946, 7,000 refugees found welcome in camps or *harsharoth*, while waiting to leave for the United States or Palestine. OSE committees were set up in all the large cities: Rome, Milan, Turin, Florence and Trieste. Despite the presence of doctors, operations focused on assisting children.

In 1946, OSE-Italy concentrated its efforts on the Riccione, Ostia and Canazei holiday camps in the Haut-Adige region. It also organised holidays for children who were in the refugee camps with the help of the *Joint* and the *United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration* (UNRRA).

Today, OSE-Italy has continued in this direction with the Caletta Castiglioncello camp which welcomes hundreds of children including Israeli terrorist victims, and more recently teenage orphans from Pinsk in Belarus.

It has diversified its activities by setting up a health clinic and the C.S.A (vocational apprentice training assistance) for children and teenagers with learning and language disorders.

On 8 November 2007, OSE inaugurated the SpaziOSE children's play centre in the working class Marconi district in Rome. It is a very modern day centre with artistic and cultural activities, as well as games for children aged 3 to 13.

OSE-Switzerland: in operation until 1998

OSE-Switzerland founded by Jacques Bloch in 1943 upon his arrival from France, performed the same activities as Union-OSE in Geneva. After the war, it focused on assisting children whose state of health required rest or stays in a high-altitude location: children of Buchenwald, *Alyah des Jeunes* children and young people with tuberculosis. A first initiative launched in the Bernese Alps was transferred to Champéry in the Valais canton where a health camp for French children was set up. It proceeded to set up in Morgins with a school and a curriculum adapted to the different situations. Thousands of children stayed there until it was closed at the end of the 1960s. The fight against tuberculosis in two health centres and sponsorships especially with France, Italy, Romania and Tunisia continued until 1998.

OSE-Mexico: an ongoing activity

OSE-Mexico was founded in 1941 to help and support European Jews. In the fifties, the association owned a social and medical center in Mexico and a summer camp in Caranaveca.

North Africa: Jews in distress

Loyal to its pioneer principles in medico-social initiatives, OSE took care of the situation of Jews in Morocco and Tunisia who were living under indescribable hygiene conditions in the *Mellahs* and *Haras*¹⁶.

OSE-Tunisia: 1947-1966

Union-OSE created a new branch, OSE-Tunisia with a view to "assist Tunisian Judaism, the seed of Judaism to come, but which was in moral and physical danger". Dr Léon Moatti became its president in 1947. In Tunis and Djerba, two multi-purpose centres were opened with several medical consultation services and also social services, milk kitchens and well-baby clinics. Work took on another dimension in 1948 with the support of the *Joint*. The number of health centres quickly increased throughout the country in Sfax, Aryanah, Gabès, Sousse, Nabeul and lastly Tataouine, Bizerte and La Goulette. The three T campaign was launched to fight against tinea (ringworm), trachoma and tuberculosis. The health centres provided overall treatment to patients and strived to resolve medical and social problems, which required considerable and long-term efforts, and defined the future through a change in mentalities and the infiltration of new ideas.

OSE-Morocco, still up and running

An OSE committee in the process of being formed chaired by the Dr Sam Lévy filed its statutes in November 1945 and the association came to being in 1947. The two pioneer centres in Casablanca and Marrakech were immediately set up to assist populations in the *Mellahs*. Prophylactic treatment, hygiene and social work sought to fight against old diseases and child mortality. OSE conducted operations in Tangier and cities in the country's interior such as Fes, Meknes, Sefrou, and Kénitra. Health clinics and school health services worked in collaboration with Alliance and Chabad schools and the number of specialised medical services for geriatrics grew. Currently, OSE operations break down into seven axes: for Jewish and Muslim populations, in different schools, the *Maimonide* health centre in Casablanca, in inner cities, for preventive campaigns and blood collections¹⁷.

1950 – 1995



France, fifties.
North African young girls
taken care of by OSE.
Union OSE Fund

OSE-France : a revised social service

The nature of OSE's activities changed given that since 1949, there were no longer as many orphans. The organisation turned its attention to a new category of children, considered "social cases" who required different structures. The foundation for an authentic social service was laid.

After the creation of the first social worker position, the association set up an independent social service in 1954, with a head social worker with two, followed by three, then nine social workers, trained specifically using American case-work methods. The aim was to get to know children better and prepare their placement in collaboration with parents. OSE amended the legislative texts of its statutes regarding the protection of children and sought to secure a sustainable financial independence. Its multi-disciplinary teams acting on administrative or legal mandate were remunerated based on a daily rate.

Arrival of North African Jews

The beginning of the 1960s set significant challenges with the arrival of Sephardi families from Egypt, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia in France. While most of these families got past the shock of being uprooted, many became despondent having left their familiar territory behind.

OSE's work continued to focus on repairing broken ties. For these uprooted people with

shattered identities, the code of social and family relations in France was often impossible to decipher. Just as they were teaching German children the French language, OSE childcare workers endeavoured to assist immigrant Jewish children in integrating into French society. This was even more difficult given that it was essential to honour the scattered fragments of an incomplete identity and that conflict arose easily in homes that were adrift.

Renewed structures

The Weil law of 1975 furthered the professionalism of the childcare sector. OSE diversified its operations into two complementary poles: placement in children's homes or foster families and in AEMO (open environment).

From 1964 and after being given permanent empowerment in 1976, OSE took action upon the request of the preventive service or a children's judge for "social support to marginalised families or minors, who after moving or being uprooted, have difficulties adapting to their new situation". All of OSE's departments involved in this psycho-social and educational effort were supervised by district health and social services offices of the Ile-de-France region.

1995 – 2008

OSE today

New spheres of action and new challenges for OSE



The 24 structures of the association fall under five main divisions: child affairs, health, geriatrics, handicap and memories.

Child Affairs

Strengthened by a unique expertise in child affairs, OSE manages several types of institutions meeting different needs:

- Four children's homes with a capacity of around 200 children whose parents are unable to guarantee their education.
- 90 children are placed in around 60 foster homes which are remunerated by the institution.
- Educational support in an open environment provides medical and psychological supervision of children who remain with their families, in order to deal with certain educational, affective, social or other deficiencies.
- The *Maison des Sources* lends comfort and an ear to parents and their young children.
- Holiday centres give 80 children each year the chance to go on holiday.

Health

The *Elio Habib* health centre provides school health services, paediatric, gynaecology, gerontology and dental care, as well as psychological and psychiatric support to all.

Moreover, OSE intends to open a medico-psychological centre for children and teenagers shortly. Between 2008 and 2012, the association hopes to establish structures for prevention programmes, child support and education in Jewish schools in the Paris and the surrounding area, as well as in the large communities in the provinces.

Geriatrics

The *Edith Kremsdorf* and *Joseph Weill* day centres provide care to people with Alzheimer's, offers them activities or therapeutic stays and give counselling to their families. Families can participate in IT conferences and forums.

Imported from Israel, this concept is henceforth a model to be reproduced and four additional centres are scheduled to open in Paris and the surrounding area between 2009 and 2012.

Handicap

The *Robert Job* day centre welcomes 20 adults for several non-profit workshops. The *Jules and Marcelle Lévy* Assistance through Work Centre enables 65 adults to obtain employment and therefore enjoy a certain financial independence. The *Raphaël* centre, the only medico-educational institute in France to honour Jewish dietary laws of *kashrut* and Jewish festivals, welcomes 40 residential and non-residential teenagers with multiple disabilities aged 10 to 20.

Archives and History

The *Ecoute Mémoire et Histoire* (memories and history) division supports Shoah survivors and their families by bringing them together during various activities.

The *Archives et Histoire* (Archives and History) division aims to reassemble OSE's archives and write the association's history.

Conclusions



Berlin, 1927.
OSE poster aiming
at teaching the basic rules
of hygiene to children.
OSE Fund

OSE, a Jewish organisation

OSE has always asserted its Jewish identity. It is a Jewish association providing assistance to Jews in distress, be it poor shtetl populations in the Pale of Settlement, people displaced during conflict, refugees such as immigrants in France, or Jews threatened physically during pogroms and the Second World War. It has represented all Jewish trends and honoured all individuals¹⁸.

The way it is rooted in the local Jewish community is reflected in its choice of leaders and also by its concern to adapt to the needs of the populations and speak the right language. Over the years, OSE has always wanted to integrate into the society and not isolate itself from government authorities. It is a recognised organisation which raised its own questions on its legitimacy and identity. As such, the acronym OZE was a clever compromise between those who wished to confine themselves to Russia and those who had a wider vision involving Jewish people.

OSE, a medico-social association

As a health organisation, OSE is above all an association created and led by the efforts of enlightened doctors who were universal and had a deep Jewish identity regardless of whether they came from the hygiene movement of the end of the 19th century in Russia or from Tunisia, Morocco or Strasburg. They were doctors who believed in human progress, who worked for the development of populations that were underprivileged with regard to hygiene and education. These same concerns were mirrored both in the posters in Yiddish in 1925 and in the three T campaign in North Africa after the war.

OSE, a child care association

The child care division emerged simultaneously with children's centres, kindergartens, day camps and children's homes, but became more important as war progressed leaving orphans behind.

In 1922, OZE introduced mobile ambulances with diet kitchens for young children to fight against famine. This was a similar concern in doctors' report of the 14 children's homes in the South which showed children's growth and weight curves.

OSE, an adaptable association

In 1914 OSE established flexible support structures, especially mobile health teams to follow displaced populations.

In 1923, Union-OSE of Berlin created a branch in Danzig, a transit zone for Jewish refugees leaving Russia. It also set up at the Polish border where Hitler had sent Polish Jews expelled from Germany, a no man's land swarming with refugees.

It conducted similar operations in the French internment camps such as Rivesaltes and Gurs. In France during Occupation, drawing on the political clear-sightedness of some of its leaders such as Dr Joseph Weill, it managed to introduce an underground network, the Circuit Garel to rescue children.

In June 1945 it was able to welcome 426 children of Buchenwald and find adequate material and sufficiently skilled staff.

Following the war in 1947, OSE was present on the Exodus 1947 and in the transit camps in Marseille for populations leaving for Israel.

It was OSE that was called upon at the beginning of the Finaly children affair, and Gaby Cohen (Niny) took care of them for a while when they returned from Spain.

Wherever the need, great or small, OSE was there.

OSE, an innovative association

The first day camp for very young children was set up in Montmorency in 1934. It welcomed children of poor immigrant Jews and at this time,

OSE was already concerned with repairing broken identities, helping these children to integrate and teaching them not to be ashamed of Yiddish, the language of their parents.

In addition, the daily schedule included everything that could make children alert, such as gymnastics, games and shows¹⁹.

In September 1936, a medico-pedagogical support initiative was launched by Dr Polinow who died during deportation. It was an observation and re-adaptation centre for difficult children, or with behavioural disorders²⁰. Here again, OSE was a pioneer.

In keeping with its diet kitchens of 1922, in 1946, OSE set up the first dental car for war victims in Paris with the financial support of OSE-Mexico. Comprising a dental operator and a technical laboratory, it completed the Neuilly dental hygiene institute.

Similarly, the nursing school in Buenos Aires opened in 1946 was similar to that in Lithuania opened in the 1920s. The only one of its kind in all of Central and South America, it received support as a public school. The connection is evident between these developments and those that occur today in foster placement²¹, and in the Edith Kremsdorf day centre, with structures such as "support to supporters"²². The OSE of today has developed innovated geriatric structures and copes with disability, and henceforth, multiple disabilities.

