

World Jewish Population in the 1980s: A Short Outline

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Documentation

While the demographic statistics of Israeli Jews are copious and reliable, the respective information on the Diaspora is deficient in quantity and quality. By now only a minority of the Diaspora countries specify the Jews as a religious or ethnic group in their population censuses, and hardly any vital or migratory statistics on Diaspora Jews are compiled officially. Most of the demographic information available on Diaspora Jews comes from Jewish sources. Particularly important are sample surveys of local or country-wide Jewish populations. However, the available information is incomplete, uncoordinated, and of varying quality. It poses serious evaluation problems with respect to the comparability of different data sets. Yet through persevering study at the Hebrew University's Institute of Contemporary Jewry in Jerusalem, it has become possible to create a rather coherent and continually updated body of demographic information on the Jewish Diaspora and, in conjunction with the Israeli data, on World Jewry as a whole.

There is a good deal of similarity between some of the basic demographic findings thus obtained for most of the Diaspora countries. Correspondence is also found between comparable information on the Jews and the general populations of the developed Diaspora countries. Though the main features of the demographic situation and trends in the Diaspora are sufficiently clear, caution is required as to the exactness of many of the available figures.

Size and Geographical Distribution of World Jewish Population

The world's Jews have numbered about 13 million in recent years. During the 1970s their figure was still growing slowly due to natural

increase in Israel, while the Diaspora was already shrinking (see below), but by now a stage of “zero population growth” has been reached.

The major regional Jewries in descending order of the Jewish population, as estimated for 1985, are (in millions): North America – 6.0, Israel – 3.5, East Europe and Balkans – 1.7, West Europe – 1.0. The Jews of Latin America now total less than 0.5 million. The numbers of those remaining both in Asia outside Israel and in Africa outside the Republic of South Africa are small (see Table 1).

Though the Jews are characterized by unique geographical scattering, marked concentrations are found within this dispersal. 74 countries are known to have more than 100 Jewish residents each, but 83% of world Jewry live in the 3 countries with over 1,000,000 Jews and 95% in the 9 countries with 100,000 or more Jews (similarly 94% of Diaspora Jewry reside in the respective 8 Diaspora countries). These are in descending order of Jewish population size as of 1985: United States – 5,700,000; Israel – 3,517,000; Soviet Union – 1,545,000;¹ France – 530,000; Great Britain – 328,000; Canada – 310,000; Argentina – 226,000; South Africa – 117,000; Brazil – approximately 100,000. Geographical concentrations of many Jews, despite the scattering of others, are found not only with regard to entire countries but also on the level of cities and neighbourhoods. The majority of Jews in the Diaspora and Israel live in metropolitan areas where their number exceeds 100,000. Within such areas or individual cities, a conspicuous tendency prevails for the Jews to be more densely represented in certain neighbourhoods.

In 1985 the Jews formed a majority of 82% in Israel (63% including the Administered Areas), but in no Diaspora country did their proportion reach as much as 2.5% of the total population. It exceeded 1% in 3 countries only: United States – 2.4%, Canada – 1.2%, and in the miniature instance of Gibraltar – 2.1%. Elsewhere the Jews accounted

1. The three post-World War II censuses of the Soviet Union indicated 2,268,000 Jews in 1959, 2,151,000 in 1970 and 1,811,000 in 1979. These figures are consistent among themselves, if the known changes during the intervals – emigration and a negative balance of internal evolution – are taken into account. Accordingly, though it is likely that some persons of fully Jewish descent existed above the respective census figures, they too were consistent in concealing their Jewishness. Any quantitative clue is lacking for estimating those among them that might still effectively be Jews. We have therefore used the census figure of 1979 as basis for our updating estimate, while appending this reservation.

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF JEWS IN THE WORLD, BY REGIONS AND MAJOR COUNTRIES (ROUGH ESTIMATES), 1988

| Region or Country | Absolute Number | % in World | % in Diaspora |
|---|-----------------|------------|---------------|
| World | 12,979,000 | 100.0 | – |
| Israel | 3,659,000 | 28.2 | – |
| Diaspora | 9,320,000 | 71.8 | 100.0 |
| Americas | 6,448,000 | 49.7 | 69.2 |
| North America | 6,010,000 | 46.3 | 64.5 |
| thereof: US | 5,700,000 | 43.9 | 61.2 |
| Canada | 310,000 | 2.4 | 3.3 |
| Latin America | 438,000 | 3.4 | 4.7 |
| thereof: Argentina | 220,000 | 1.7 | 2.4 |
| Brazil | 100,000 | 0.8 | 1.1 |
| Europe | 2,608,000 | 21.1 | 28.0 |
| West Europe | 1,054,000 | 8.1 | 11.3 |
| thereof: France | 530,000 | 4.1 | 5.7 |
| Great Britain | 322,000 | 2.5 | 3.4 |
| East Europe & Balkans ^a | 1,554,000 | 12.0 | 16.7 |
| thereof: USSR | 1,435,000 | 11.1 | 15.4 |
| Asia & Africa (excl. Israel) ^a | 175,000 | 1.3 | 1.9 |
| thereof: South Africa | 114,000 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| Oceania | 90,000 | 0.7 | 1.0 |

^a. The Asian territories of USSR and Turkey are included in "East Europe and Balkans"

for less than 1% and often for less than 1 per 1,000 of the entire population.

Other things being roughly equal, smaller Jewish populations appear to be more prone to assimilation and mixed marriage. In the open societies of today, the scattering of a part of the Jews within countries and cities as well as their low proportions among the inhabitants of most of their localities of residence (New York being a notable exception) constitute risk factors for Jewish cohesion. The great geographical mobility of Diaspora Jews within countries and metropolitan areas, which is reported particularly from the United

States, creates problems as to maintaining existing Jewish institutions or setting up new ones when considerable numbers of Jews move to other localities or neighbourhoods.

Demographic Dynamics

Striking differences prevail between Israel and the Diaspora, which will therefore be considered separately.

Diaspora

The general populations of the developed countries, which are the reference frame for most Diaspora Jewries, are experiencing changes in marriage patterns related to greater permissiveness in sexual matters: formal marriages are postponed or not contracted at all, cohabitation of informal couples is on the rise, as are divorces and single-person or single-parent households of divorcees. These features have negative repercussions on fertility that are not offset by any remarriage of divorcees. Since the 1970s the fertility of most developed countries has been below the average of 2.1 children per woman (including the unmarried) that is required, at minimum mortality, for demographic replacement of a population in the long run. For instance, average fertility has been around only 1.7 children among white women in the US since 1973; in West Germany it is now 1.3. These examples illustrate that in modern populations sub-replacement fertility may go together with economic success and affluence, which is a conclusion relevant for the Diaspora Jews as well. Prolonged low fertility produces aging of the respective populations. Aging in turn depresses the birthrate, because there are relatively fewer people in the reproductive ages, but raises the death rate, due to the relative frequency of the elderly. It thus impairs the natural increase that can become negative when more persons die than are born, as happens now in many Diaspora populations.

In keeping with the above-mentioned general changes in nuptiality patterns, the Diaspora Jews also marry less or at any rate postpone marriage, and get divorced now more often than before, with negative effects on fertility. The fertility of the Jews is consistently found to be even lower than that of the surrounding population. In particular, analysis of the results of the many local Jewish community surveys conducted in the US in recent years clearly shows that the Jewish fertility is far below replacement level.

Moreover, in our rather secular age and with the Jews being a minority everywhere in the Diaspora, they are exposed to assimilation.

This may cause net losses (more secessions than accessions) to Jewish populations or, at any rate, a weakening of Jewish identity that can lead to the same result later, whether in the present or a coming generation. Of particular importance in this context are out-marriages of Jews with a non-Jewish partner. Nowadays these mostly take place without religious conversion of either spouse before the wedding. If so, a mixed couple is formed and if it remains mixed also later, the demographic outcome for the Jewish population is deferred to the next generation. There are indications that mixed marriages are even less fertile than homogamous Jewish ones. At any rate, since half of the respective spouses are Jews, also half of the children should be so in order to avoid demographic losses on this ground for the Diaspora populations. In fact, it is usual that less than half of the children from mixed marriages are themselves Jews. This has been contested in the US, but the fragmentary evidence seems to confirm it there as well. Under such circumstances, the “effectively Jewish” fertility – exclusive of the non-Jewish children of mixed couples – is reduced even further than the full fertility of Jewish women, low as this is anyway.

The frequency of mixed marriages is already very high in some smaller European countries and it is increasing elsewhere, rapidly so in the Americas. There is by now widespread social acceptance of such marriages among Diaspora Jews. The levels of total out-marriages, including conversionary ones, are even higher. It has been estimated that about 30% of the currently marrying Jewish individuals in the US contract mixed marriages, which implies that about 45% of the currently formed couples with at least one Jewish spouse are mixed.² The consequences for the next generation cannot but be considerable, and even those children who will grow up as Jews are likely to also develop some affinity to the religion of the non-Jewish parent and his/her family. Moreover, as out-marriages become more common, the proportion involving accessions (whether formal or informal) to the Jewish populations seems to decline. Jews have had a tradition of restraint regarding proselytism, and modes of conversion are now precisely one of the points contested between the various branches of organized Judaism. Hence there is either little activism in this respect or not a few of the conversions that do take place constitute an element of friction within Jewish society.

2. The proportion is always greater for couples than for individuals, because a homogamous Jewish union appears only once in the count of couples but twice in that of the component individuals.

In consequence of these demographic processes, all or nearly all of the larger Diaspora Jewries now have a balance of internal evolution (i.e., regardless of external migrations) that is close to nil or outrightly negative. Though life expectancies are high, the very low “effectively Jewish” fertility, any net assimilatory losses and the adverse consequences of the already pronounced aging (see below) operate jointly towards reduction of Diaspora populations. As to prospects for the future, most demographers are of the opinion that low fertility will continue to prevail in the developed countries; if so, Jews will be influenced by this general atmosphere. Aging is bound to continue its rising trend under these circumstances, and out-marriages are on the increase. All the mentioned factors combine to intensify the demographic crisis in the Diaspora.

By contrast, there is no uniformity regarding the external migration balance of Diaspora Jewries. Of late, this has been positive in some instances, e.g.: the US, Canada, Australia; while it has been negative in others, e.g.: the Soviet Union, South Africa, Argentina. Until the 1970s the migration balance between the Diaspora as a whole and Israel was positive for the latter, i.e. there were more *olim* than *yordim*. By now, the potentials for aliyah from the Soviet satellites and the Islamic countries are almost exhausted, while the Jews of the free and prosperous countries have so far shown little propensity to settle permanently in Israel. In the first half of the 1980s, when the exit of Jews from the USSR was virtually barred, international migrations of Jews shrank and, on average for several years, the migratory balance between the Diaspora and Israel tended to be nil. A surplus of immigrants in a Diaspora Jewry will partly or wholly compensate for the effects of a negative balance of internal evolution, while a net migratory loss will combine with these effects to reduce even further the overall balance of current demographic changes.

Israel

Israel's Jewish population is by now rather evenly composed of people of European or of Asian-African origin. Since the 1950s a remarkable convergence has taken place in Israel between these two origin groups with respect to their previously quite dissimilar patterns of mortality, nuptiality and fertility. Therefore, when summarizing the present situation in these respects, Israel's Jews can be described as essentially one population (of course, with some internal differentiation, such as exists within the populations of other countries as well).

Mortality is very low in Israel, nuptiality still very widespread, divorce limited, fertility considerable and the age composition rather youthful for a modern country. Therefore Israel's Jews have now a natural increase of about 1.4% annually. In particular, unlike the Diaspora, they do not sustain any net assimilatory losses. As long as a substantial migratory surplus lasted, their overall demographic balance exceeded the natural increase by that amount.

Of special interest, demographically and from the national-Jewish point of view, is the fertility situation in Israel. Jewish fertility in Israel is significantly greater not only than that in the Diaspora but also than that among the genreal populations of the developed countries. As against an average of 1.7 children per white woman in the US and even lower figures in other countries, Israel's Jewish women – as stated, with little differentiation according to their geographical origin – have had a current average fertility of 2.8 children in recent years. This level was attained, on the one hand, through a rapid decrease of fertility in the Asian-African origin group – partly related to the replacement, in the reproductive ages, of many foreign-born by Israeli-born women. Such a decrease, which has conformed with the global trend of transition from traditional to modern demographic patterns, was only to be expected from co-existence with European Jews in the social climate of Israel. Remarkable, however, is the rise that took place in the fertility of the European Jews, with increasing duration of stay in Israel and the intergenerational shift from foreign-born to Israeli-born women. This occurred despite hardships of immigrant absorption for many of those concerned and some difficulties of life in Israel altogether. Religious Jews have greater fertility than the more secular ones, but also the latter display above-replacement fertility in Israel. Perhaps this evidences an essentially positive attitude to life and the future that has pervaded large sections of Israel's Jews. Whatever the reasons, the Jews of Israel offer an interesting spectacle on the contemporary demographic scene of a population that widely and efficiently practices family planning but chooses its planning targets above replacement level.

The above listed positive features notwithstanding, the demographic situation of Israel's Jews is not devoid of problems. The previously very high propensity to get married has somewhat declined. Generally the question is unavoidable: will the Israeli Jewish population, open as it is to outside influences, maintain its present edge in fertility vis-a-vis the other developed countries? Moreover, aliyah (immigration) has contracted to such an extent that, on average for several years, it does not more than compensate for *yeridah* (emigration); both are now around 10,000–15,000 annually. *Yeridah* is thus limited (3–4 per

thousand), but not insignificant, especially as part of it is composed of highly qualified individuals attracted by superior opportunities for careers elsewhere. An immediate potential for large-scale emigration from Jewries in distress is not evident now except in the Soviet Union, whose Jews are virtually debarred from leaving at the time these lines are being written and, when they could leave in recent years, preferred to go to other destinations, especially the US, rather than to Israel.

For many decades immigration of Jews used to compensate for the far larger fertility and natural increase of the Arabs in Israel and Palestine. This does not apply any longer because of the reduced aliyah. It is true that, on the other hand, the fertility and natural increase of the Arabs in the State territory of Israel have gone down dramatically, as the last generation born in the Mandatory period was replaced in the procreative age range by those born and educated in Israel. Yet the Arabs' fertility and natural increase are still considerably greater than those of the Israeli Jews. The respective differentials even widen if comparison is made between Israel's Jews and the Arabs in the Administered Areas, though there the actual population growth is slowed down by emigration. In the absence of sufficient aliyah, the proportion of Arabs in the State territory of Israel is growing slowly, and the same is likely to happen in Israel plus the Administered Areas. There is awareness among the Jewish public in Israel of the problems posed by the low ebb of aliyah and by a shifting demographic balance vis-a-vis the Arabs, and wide consensus on the desirability of Jewish population growth for idealistic Zionist as well as for practical reasons.

Population Characteristics

Diaspora

Wherever data are available on the age composition of Diaspora Jews, these are nearly always found to be more aged than the general population of their country or city of residence. The Jews have smaller proportions of children, but larger proportions of late-middle-aged and elderly persons. While aging of populations is now a common process in the developed countries, its intensity is even more pronounced among Diaspora Jewries. The reasons are: above all, the Jews' particularly low "effective" fertility; but also losses of younger adults – and indirectly of their offspring – due to assimilation as well as to aliyah or any other emigration; and after-effects of the Holocaust (where this applies). It is estimated that in 1975 the numbers of 0–14 year old children and of elderly aged 65+ were roughly equal

(15–16%) in the Diaspora as a whole, whereas a clear surplus of elderly (19%) over children (15%) had developed until 1985. Besides, the percentage of very old people (aged 75 and over) is growing markedly. There are considerable regional differences in these respects; the Jewish population of the US is less aged than those of many other Diaspora countries.

The pronounced aging of the Jewish populations probably leads to feminization, since on the average women live longer than men and hence form usually a majority of the elderly. Aging together with certain changes in marriage patterns, such as prolonged singlehood and divorce, reduces the size of Jewish households and raises the proportion of one-person households. Larger numbers of infirm old Jews are likely to raise the respective institutionalization rates. Beyond such more narrowly demographic consequences, the pronounced aging of the Jews implies fundamental economic and societal changes with widespread ramifications that will extend into the future, e.g. regarding labour force participation, income structure, consumption patterns, demand for smaller dwellings or residences in climatically favoured zones, need for geriatric services, etc. The intensified aging will perhaps also have repercussions on the tenor of Jewish communal life, and on the Jews' position and participation in the general society amidst which they live.

The very low fertility and birth rates in the Diaspora during recent decades have already led to a remarkable diminution in the absolute and relative numbers of children. This in turn has had strong implications for the enrollment in Jewish educational institutions. In the US, for instance, the number enrolled in Jewish schools and kindergartens dropped by 33% between 1966/7 and 1981/2–1982/3, but the total of 3–17 year old Jewish children is estimated to have declined by as much as 43%. According to these figures, the enrollment rates (relative to existing child population) actually rose despite the drastic decline in the absolute size of the enrollment.

The Jewish world population has undergone a far-reaching geographical redistribution during the last generations, due to large-scale migrations and to the effects of the Holocaust in Europe. Three-quarters of present Diaspora Jewry live in countries where there were still relatively few Jews little more than a century ago or even later – in the Americas, South Africa and Oceania. As long as the great modern migrations of the Jews lasted, their majority in the countries of destination were foreign-born persons who had immigrated from abroad; moreover, most of them originated from Eastern Europe with its tradition-bound and in part still very religious Jewish population. By

now, most of the Jews in the new countries of residence are native-born with all that this implies in terms of familiarity with surrounding conditions, proficiency in the national language, involvement in the affairs of their respective countries, and – enhanced exposure to assimilation.

The overwhelming majority of Diaspora Jews live in large cities or metropolitan areas, and share characteristics of the middle and upper-middle classes there. In some countries, though, and notably in the US, there is now also an opposite tendency for younger Jews with professional qualifications to be sent by large firms, or on governmental assignments, to smaller and more remote localities where they are needed in new enterprises or public services. There too, however, as well as in any developing countries where Jews now live, most of them behave demographically according to the patterns of the large-city Jewries of developed countries.

In comparison to the total population of their countries or cities of residence, Diaspora Jews usually have higher formal education, are concentrated in white collar occupations, and are economically better off. In some countries, most of the younger Jewish generation are now accustomed to study at universities. Occupationally, Jews are increasingly found in upper managerial positions, as self-employed professionals and in professional jobs of public services (education, health, law, etc.). Individual Jews are conspicuous for outstanding achievements in the sciences and the arts as well as in the public life of important countries.

Israel

The proportion aged 65 and over among Israel's Jews rose from 4% around 1950 to 10% in 1980–1985. This was however not due mainly to reduced fertility, as in the Diaspora, but to a gradual adjustment of the age structure, which had previously been dominated by selectively young immigrants, to the actual fertility level prevailing in Israel. The current proportion of elderly among the Jews of Israel is lower than in most developed countries, since fertility and natural increase are greater in Israel.

While Israeli Jews reside in more than 900 rural localities of less than 2,000 inhabitants each, 90% of the total Jewish population congregate in localities above 2,000 inhabitants, and 65% in the metropolitan areas of Greater Tel Aviv, Greater Haifa and Jerusalem. Most of the rural localities are kibbutzim and moshavim (i.e. voluntarily collective or cooperative settlements), which are a well-known peculiarity of Israel.

The proportion of Jews in Israel who have received a higher education (13+ years of study) as well as of academic graduates is continually rising, especially among the younger adults. Unlike the Diaspora, where the relatively small Jewish minorities can specialize in selective occupations, Israeli Jews provide manpower for the whole gamut of a national economy. All the same, a shift in the supply of low-skill manual labour is unmistakable: while once this was provided by Zionist pioneers, subsequently by Jewish mass immigrants, and later by Israeli Arabs, it is now largely supplied by Arabs from the Administered Areas who seek employment in Israel.

Demographic Projections

Projections are, of course, not prophecies but serve to show in quantitative terms the changes that will occur in the size and composition of a given population if it evolves according to defined assumptions. If the assumptions reflect the current demographic dynamics, the projection becomes a means for clarifying the longer term implications of these existing dynamics. In the making of projections it is usual to apply alternative sets of assumptions, both as a precaution and in order to indicate a reasonable range of variation.

We shall present here three versions of projections that are intended to roughly illustrate plausible evolutions of the Jewish population in the Diaspora as a whole and the US particularly, in Israel, and in the world during the 25-year period from 1985 to 2010 (see Table 2). The common features of the three versions are: low mortality and a nil assumption for the migration balance between the Diaspora and Israel (in keeping with the realities of the early 1980s), while a migratory surplus was assumed for US Jewry. If the balance of migrations between the Diaspora and Israel should change markedly – e.g., through large scale aliyah of Soviet Jews, the projection results will have to be adjusted accordingly. The scenarios regarding the other parameters of

the different versions were essentially as follows:³

| <u>Region</u> | <u>Version of Projection</u> | <u>Fertility</u> | <u>Net Assimilatory Losses</u> |
|---------------|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Diaspora | Medium | Constantly low | Moderate |
| | Low | " " | Strong |
| | High | Rising | Moderate |
| Israel | Medium | Declining somewhat | Nil |
| | Low | Declining markedly | " |
| | High | Constantly substantial | " |

Diaspora

In consequence of continually low fertility and intensified aging, official population projections for developed countries, e.g. the US, expect that natural increase will cease at some time in the coming decades and, with no or little immigration, a gradual reduction of population size will set in. Already now a shrinkage of population is occurring in a few countries, e.g. West Germany.

As stated above, the internal demographic evolution of the Diaspora has been negative for some time, because of particularly low fertility,

3. The projections presented here for the whole Diaspora are actually the sum of ten regional projections (with appropriately differing assumptions). The projections for Israel were adapted from those computed by the Central Bureau of Statistics in 1987. The calibrations for the assumptions of the projections were approximately as follows (an arrow indicates gradual change from the initial to the terminal level of the projection period):

| <u>Region</u> | <u>Version of Projection</u> | <u>Fertility</u> | <u>Annual Net Assimilatory Losses</u> | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| | | | <u>New born</u> | <u>Others</u> |
| Diaspora incl. US | Medium | 1.5 | 2.5% → 12.5% | 0.2% |
| | Low | " | 5.0% → 25.0% | 0.4% |
| | High | 1.5 – 2.1 | 2.5% → 12.5% | 0.2% |
| Israel | Medium | 2.8 – 2.4 | Nil | Nil |
| | Low | 2.8 – 2.1 | " | " |
| | High | 2.8 | " | " |

The migratory surplus of the US Jews was put at 15,000 annually, i.e., altogether 375,000 throughout the 25-year projection period.

TABLE 2. PROJECTION OF JEWISH POPULATION SIZE, 1985–2010

| Region | Jews (in millions) | | | % of Change 1985–2010 |
|--------------------------|--------------------|------|------|--------------------------|
| | 1985 | 2000 | 2010 | |
| Medium Projection | | | | |
| World | 13.0 | 12.4 | 12.0 | –8 |
| Diaspora | 9.5 | 8.2 | 7.3 | –23 |
| thereof: US | 5.7 | 5.4 | 5.1 | –11 |
| Israel | 3.5 | 4.2 | 4.7 | +34 |
| Low Projection | | | | |
| World | 13.0 | 12.0 | 11.3 | –13 |
| Diaspora | 9.5 | 7.9 | 6.8 | –28 |
| thereof: US | 5.7 | 5.1 | 4.7 | –18 |
| Israel | 3.5 | 4.1 | 4.5 | +29 |
| High Projection | | | | |
| World | 13.0 | 12.8 | 12.8 | –2 |
| Diaspora | 9.5 | 8.5 | 7.9 | –17 |
| thereof: US | 5.7 | 5.6 | 5.4 | –5 |
| Israel | 3.5 | 4.3 | 4.9 | +40 |

strong aging and assimilatory attrition, which includes the effects of mixed marriages on the offspring. Little wonder that the medium and low versions of the Diaspora projections point to marked decreases in the total of Jews there. Somewhat mitigated, this trend appears also in the high version, because the negative influence of aging and assimilatory losses will outweigh the effects of any plausible rise in fertility. For the US in particular, it can be stated that only a combination of markedly rising fertility and virtual absence of assimilatory losses (including identification of half the newborn from mixed marriages as Jews) could prevent a population decrease. Projections that are not presented here have also been made for all the other major Diaspora regions; in most of them the present demographic situation and therefore also the future prospects are more adverse than in the US. According to the medium version, the total of Jews in the Diaspora would decrease from somewhat less than 9.5 million in 1985 to 8.2 million in 2000 and about 7.3 million until the year 2010, i.e. a decline of 23%.

Moreover, not only the size, but also the cohesion of Diaspora Jewries will be affected, if assimilation and in particular the frequency of mixed marriages continue to increase.

The percent of elderly (65 years and above) among all Diaspora Jews will not change considerably between 1985 and 2010, and will stay in the range of 19–20% according to the medium projection. The reason is that the small cohorts born between the later 1920s and the mid-1940s, i.e. mainly during the great economic recession and World War II, will enter the elderly range. When, however, the large cohorts born during the “baby boom” around 1950 will reach ages 65 and above as from the second decade of the coming century, the proportion of elderly among Diaspora Jews will rise drastically.

Israel

Israel's Jews will continue to grow, even in the absence of a migratory surplus, thanks to their natural increase. They will expand from 3.5 million in 1985 to 4.1 million in 2000 and 4.5 by 2010, according to the medium projection. In the latter year, the proportion of Jews in the territory of the State may be about 76%. It is much more difficult to anticipate their proportion in the whole of Israel and the Administered Areas, because of uncertainties regarding future fertility and migrations of the Arabs in the Areas, but a decrease in the share of the Jews is to be expected.

In Israel too the percentage of elderly Jews is shown by the projections to remain rather stable during 1985–2010, for reasons similar to those already stated with regard to the Diaspora. But the level of that percentage will only be half of what it is in the Diaspora: 10% as compared to 20%. A marked increase in the proportion of elderly is also anticipated for Israel after 2010, because large birth cohorts will then reach the ages 65 and above.

World Jewry

Until recently the substantial natural increase of Israel's Jews offset the adverse internal evolution in the Diaspora and caused a growth of World Jewry, though on a continually decreasing scale. By now, a temporary equilibrium has been reached: the natural increase in Israel approximately equals the diminution in the Diaspora, so that World Jewry is in the stage of “zero population growth”. This situation will not endure, however, as the projections show. The size of World Jewry will start to shrink, primarily because of intensified rates of diminution in the Diaspora but possibly also because of some lowering of the natural increase among Israel's Jews. The growth of Israel's proportion among

World Jewry will not suffice to counterbalance the negative influence of the worsening evolution in the Diaspora. According to the medium projection, the total number of Jews in the world may contract from 13.0 million in 1985 to 12.4 million in 2000 and 12.0 million by the year 2010, i.e. an 8% decrease over 25 years.

As of 1985, 71% of the world's Jews already lived in the two countries with the largest Jewish populations – the US and Israel. By 2010 the joint prominence of these two major Jewries will be enhanced, so that together they will comprise as many as 81% of all Jews according to the medium projection. While the relative share of Israel alone may rise substantially from 27% to 39%, that of US Jews will barely maintain itself (44% in 1985, 42% in 2010). The number of Jews in Israel will approach that in the US by 2010, according to all versions of the projections presented below.

Concluding Remarks

The above brief analysis suggests that demographically it is not irrelevant whether Jews live in Israel or the Diaspora. Israel's Jews are not exposed to mixed marriages and assimilatory losses, and the immigrants from Europe and America have attained in Israel a fertility level that much surpasses that in the Diaspora and results in not inconsiderable natural increase. There is wide consensus among Israel's Jews on the desirability of population growth. Demographic policies, partly coinciding with public support for families with children, have been in operation and are likely to be reorganized in the future.

The ongoing numerical decline of the Diaspora and the future diminution of World Jewry, as indicated by the projections, come after the loss of a third of the Jewish people in the Holocaust. Viewed in this perspective, the Diaspora's current demographic problems differ in historical impact from the analogous, albeit less severe, demographic processes prevailing in the developed countries. Larger scale demographic policies in the Diaspora, which must be on a voluntary basis, are obviously not easy to put into effect. This, however, does not preclude the possibility of creating a much needed awareness of the demographic issues, and their implications, among the Jewish leadership and public. Choices of a marriage partner and of fertility targets are made by a great many individuals and couples, and it is only right that they should be informed what collective consequences their private decisions may have.

In view of the gravity of the issues involved, it is necessary to improve and update the demographic documentation on Diaspora Jewry. Plans are taking shape for a round of coordinated socio-demographic surveys to be conducted among major Jewish populations in the free world around 1990.

Further Reading

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