

**Rue Amelot:
Rescue as Resistance in Occupied France, 1940-1944**
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In 1997, a British couple uncovered a virtually unknown episode of the Second World War after buying a remote thirteenth century chateau near Montpellier. They discovered that the chateau had secretly housed more than 500 Jewish children between 1943 and 1947; the operation was part of a network of refugees in the south of France funded by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt.¹ In fact, such clandestine operations occurred quite frequently in Occupied and Vichy France as dozens of groups collaborated to save Jewish children from the threat of deportation.

Initially, discussions of Jewish resistance focussed on the reasons for Jewish passivity during the Holocaust. Why did Jews fail to resist, asked Raul Hilberg in his seminal *The Destruction of European Jews*. Hannah Arendt argued the point even more forcefully in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, castigating Jewish leadership for meekly leading their flock to the slaughter.² The concept of resistance has been broadened in recent decades to include the thousands of methods employed by

¹ *Sunday Telegraph*, May 27, 1997, p. 16. Quoted in Elisabeth Maxwell, "The Rescue of Jews in France and Belgium During the Holocaust," *Journal of Holocaust Education*, 7, 1-2 (Summer/Autumn 1998), pp. 9-10. Eleanor Roosevelt headed the Committee for the Care of European Children.

² Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1961), esp. chapters 7 and 8; Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin, 1994).

Jews to stay alive under Nazi rule, and the maintenance of Jewish life in all its religious and cultural manifestations.³

The dilemma of resistance for the foreign Jews of Paris, as we shall see, was between two options: armed resistance, or saving civilian lives. The organized rescue of Jewish children represents a unique aspect of the Holocaust in France. For while 27 percent of the roughly 300,000 Jewish adults in France perished during the Holocaust, the Final Solution only claimed 14% of Jewish children and teenagers. The 10,000 children who were saved by the Jewish resistance explain this gap.⁴ The widespread activities of several Jewish and Christian groups laid the groundwork for this peculiarity of French Holocaust history, not only in Paris, but also across most of the country,

Another case of French “exceptionalism” during the Holocaust concerns the fate of Jews themselves as a whole. While Vichy’s collaboration with the Nazis in the implementation of the Final Solution was conveniently swept under the rug in the immediate postwar years amid claims that it served as a “shield” to protect Jews, this argument no longer stands up to scrutiny. It may be true that the death toll in France was comparably low compared to other Western European nations under Nazi rule; yet it should not be forgotten that among the unoccupied, autonomous,

³ Renée Poznanski, “Reflections on Jewish Resistance and Jewish Resistant in France,” *Jewish Social Studies*, 2, 1 (1995), p. 127; François Bédarida, “Préface,” in Adam Rayski, *Le choix des Juifs à Vichy: Entre soumission et résistance* (Paris: La Découverte, 1992), pp. iv-v.

⁴ Lucien Lazare, “Aperçus sur les organisations juives de sauvetage,” *Monde juif*, 152 (Sept.-Dec. 1994), pp. 21-27; Maxwell, “Rescue,” p. 3. 24 percent of a total Jewish population of 330,000 perished in the Holocaust in France. See Susan Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French, and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), p. 3

and semiautonomous allies of the Third Reich, only the French and the Slovaks delivered Jews from their established heartlands to the Nazis.⁵ Only 3 percent of the 75,721 Jews who were deported from France returned, compared to 59 percent of the 63,085 non-Jewish deportees, consisting of resisters, hostages, and political or criminal prisoners.⁶

Following the abrupt end to the “phoney war,” the French signed an armistice at Compiègne on June 22. Of all the countries occupied by the Nazi regime, France was unique, for in that country the Germans established both a military occupation and permitted an autonomous government with a wide degree of independence. A demarcation line separated the northern part of France, three fifths of the country and its richest and most strategically important part, where a military governor, General Otto von Stülpnagel, held authority as the *Militärbefehlshaber* in Frankreich (*MBF*). But the French government, now based in the provincial town of Vichy, was theoretically responsible for the whole of France, even the Occupied Zone – as long as its decision did not contradict those of the Germans.⁷ This arrangement lasted until November 1942 when, in response to the Allied landing in North Africa, Germany and Italy both occupied the southern part of France.

⁵ Zuccotti, *The Holocaust*, p. 135.

⁶ Poznanski, “Reflections,” p. 131.

⁷ Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, “The Nazis and the Jews in Occupied Western Europe, 1940-1944,” *Journal of Modern History*, 54, 4 (Dec. 1982), p. 691.

The features of Maréchal Philippe Pétain's national restoration program did not surprise those who were aware to the Vichy leader's traditionalist views: administrative purges, outlawing of free masonry, punishment of those responsible for defeat, repression of the Communists and Gaullists, denaturalization of certain French citizens, and the establishment of a *Statut des Juifs*, an anti-Jewish code.⁸ Pétain, like many French citizens, was disturbed by the massive influx of East European Jewish immigration in the previous decade and was convinced of the existence of a "Jewish Question." While he accepted the presence of the established French Jews – indeed, many of them had fought bravely for France in 1914-1918 – he cared little for the several thousand Jews that had immigrated to France in the 1930s.⁹ Within a few months after Vichy's signing of the armistice, one of Pétain's chief cabinet officers would even brag "France is the only country which, along with Germany, persecutes the Jews the most."¹⁰

Sociologically speaking, it would be erroneous to speak of a unified Jewish *community* in France on the eve of the war. Indeed, French Jewry in 1939 was a heterogeneous, multifaceted group that boasted numerous ideological viewpoints and cultural traditions. The first dividing line was the rift between "French Jews" or "*Israélites*," assimilated Jews who had long held French citizenship, and the "immigrant Jews," those who had established themselves in France in the past decades. For the most part, they were Polish, Rumanian, Hungarian, Russian,

⁸ Philippe Burrin *La France à l'heure allemande, 1940-1944* (Paris: Seuil, 1995), p. 22.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 139-141.

Czech and Baltic state Jews, who were joined in the 1930s by German and Austrian Jews who were fleeing Nazism. These immigrants were often close to Jewish traditions, spoke Yiddish and many brought with them revolutionary political ideas. The *Israélites*, on the other hand, lived an assimilated, virtually secularized existence. Their distaste for their new coreligionists was well summarized by the Great Rabbi of Nancy, who dismissed Yiddish as “jargon.”¹¹ This seemingly ethnic division also betrayed a basic division of class, as most French Jews were bourgeois while the immigrants were more often than not artisans and manual labourers.

More importantly, there was widespread concern among French Jewish circles that the massive influx of foreign Jews would lead to a new wave of anti-Semitism, a fear that was at least partly justified. By the end of the 1930s, the nation’s problems coupled with a xenophobic response to immigration contributed to an atmosphere that rekindled old anti-Semitic demons. Many French Jews looked with an weary eye to the incoming East European Jews, perceiving a threat for their own status.

There has been considerable historiographical debate over the extent to which French Jewry was actually divided at the eve of the Second World War.

Historians such as David Weinberg, Richard Cohen and Susan Zuccotti have

¹⁰ Rayski, *Le choix des Juifs*, p. 7.

¹¹ Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida, eds., *La France des années noires*, vol. 2: *De l’Occupation à la Libération* (Paris: Seuil, 1993), p. 132.

emphasized the chasm between the French Jews and the immigrant Jews¹² The existence of an antagonistic relationship is certainly evident in the writings of many foreign Jewish activists of the time, such as poet, Communist and Resistance fighter David Knout, who condemned the cautious liberalism and elitism of the native “Happy Jews,” who quietly marched to their deaths while condemning the disruptive “isms” brought by the newcomers.¹³ Other scholars have suggested that this division has been exaggerated, including Hillel J. Kieval and, more recently, French historian André Kaspi, who has argued that the myth of an unbridgeable abyss between the two communities has been mostly embraced by North American historians who have, in his opinion, unduly stressed the differences between foreign and native Jews and failed to notice points of convergence between these two communities.¹⁴

Nevertheless, regardless of divisions within the Jewish community, it cannot be denied that Vichy saw a distinction between French and foreign-born Jews. Between the regime’s traditional anti-Semitism and government leader Pierre Laval’s willingness to forsake France’s immigrant Jews to bargain with the Nazis, France’s foreign Jews would have a difficult road ahead under Vichy. While the

¹² David Weinberg, *A Community on Trial: The Jews of Paris in the 1930s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); Richard Cohen, *The Burden of Conscience: French Jewish Leadership during the Holocaust* (Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 11; Susan Zuccotti even maintains that “[t]he mutual antipathy between French and immigrant Jews was longstanding.” Zuccotti, *The Holocaust*, p. 21.

¹³ David Knout, *Contribution à l’histoire de la Résistance juive en France, 1940-1944* (Paris: Éditions du Centre, 1944), pp. 16-17.

¹⁴ Hillel J. Kieval, “Legality and Resistance in Vichy France: The Rescue of Jewish Children,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 124, 5 (Oct. 1980), p. 341; André Kaspi, *Les Juifs pendant l’Occupation* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), pp. 17-18, 51. Kaspi does acknowledge, however, the existence of something akin to a “Mayflower complex” (Philippe Erlanger’s coined the

general death rate for the general Jewish population during the Holocaust in France is most widely considered to be 24%, the death rate among the 135,000 foreign Jews reached between 41 and 45 percent.¹⁵

In the face of tragedy, French and foreign Jews reacted differently. Many chose armed resistance; some, such as historian March Bloch, chose to fight as French Resistance fighters; others chose to fight as Jews. Many more still chose the path of non-violent resistance, trying to find ways to hamper Nazi policy. Almost immediately after the Occupation, the plight of Jews in France became a matter of concern for many organized relief groups in France, as they became subjected to discriminatory laws and repressive policies. A large network of organizations which included Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox and Quaker groups, as well as the YMCA, *Secours Suisse* and the *Réseau Dutch-Paris*, acted in different theatres across France, often unaware of what other groups were trying to achieve.¹⁶

In Paris, one such group was the *Comité de la Rue Amelot*, or Rue Amelot, a small Jewish relief organization that started providing services to the foreign Jews in the immediate aftermath of the Occupation, serving hot meals, providing medical care and supplying financial assistance for the needy. Yet as the

expression) among long-established French Jews, who often perceived themselves as the “true” French of the Jewish community.

¹⁵ Zuccotti, *The Holocaust*, p. 3. These figures appear to be the most widely shared estimate. Jeremy Josephs, citing figures supplied by Nazi-hunter Serge Klarsfeld, estimates that the percentage of foreign French Jews killed is closer to 85%, but the evidentiary base is flimsy. See Jeremy Josephs, *Swastika Over Paris*, (New York: Arcade Publishing 1989), p. 12.

¹⁶ Maxwell, “Rescue,” p. 13.

situation of Jews progressively deteriorated under the weight of Vichy's anti-Semitic policies, Rue Amelot, like many other organizations, sought to adapt its policies and alleviate the suffering of members of its community. When it became obvious that care and compassion were not enough, Rue Amelot and its leadership gradually drifted into semi-clandestinity in order to save more lives.

Their efforts culminated into an ingenious plan that allowed for Jewish children to be placed secretly with Christian families so that they could avoid deportations

Several historians have explored the Rue Amelot story in varying detail. Most conspicuous has been a string of celebratory popular history books about Rue Amelot and its most celebrated martyr, David Rapoport. The trend was no doubt encouraged by the fiftieth anniversaries and commemorations of events that occurred in World War Two France.¹⁷ While these books are not without merit, they fail to acknowledge important tensions within the Jewish community of Paris and the complex web of political groups that vied for influence under the umbrella of relief organizations. One such aspect is, as was discussed above, the chasm dividing the native and foreign Jewish communities. To which extent did these tensions influence the outcome or relief operations? Was there any evidence of heightened intra-group solidarity between the two Jewish communities as time went on and the situation progressively worsened?

¹⁷ Vivette Samuel, *Sauver les enfants* (Paris: Éditions Liana Levi, 1995); Jacqueline Baldran et Claude Bochurberg, *David Rapoport, "La mère et l'enfant," 36 rue Amelot* (Paris: Montorgueil-C.D.J.C., [1994]); Eric Connan, *Sans oublier les enfants* (Paris: Éditions Grasset & Fasquelle, 1991); Sabine Zeitoun, *Ces enfants qu'il fallait sauver* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1989).

Another set of question relates to the intensely political nature of the foreign Jewish community, which boasted at least half a dozen Zionist factions, a sizeable and well represented Bundist element as well as a young and determined Communist leadership. How did these strongly felt political opinions come to influence the relief work of Rue Amelot?

This study has made considerable use of the Rue Amelot Records collection, which is of undeniable interest, but also has its limitations. Indeed, the records are incomplete and very few of the organization's records allow us to evaluate its aims and objectives, nor does it allow us much insight into the struggles and disagreements that might have occurred within the groups leadership¹⁸

Thankfully, a number of Jews who were active with Rue Amelot or the Parisian Jewish relief scene in general have produced memoirs and historical interpretations that go a long way towards filling the gaps. Several of these books have been cited in this essay.

Rue Amelot:

Origins and Leadership

The Rue Amelot Committee was established in Paris on June 15, 1940, one day after the German capture of Paris and in the midst of a chaotic situation in which at least three quarters of the Jews had fled the city. Most Jews who were left were poor and unable to partake in the exodus, and most of the Jewish relief

organizations had simply shut down because the city's Jewish neighbourhoods were deserted. Three foreign Jews, active members of the Jewish refugee community, met to discuss a way to get relief operations back on track. The three founders were Léo Glaeser, who left his native Riga in 1907 to study at Heidelberg and La Sorbonne,¹⁹ a Polish-born Bundist named Yehuda Jakoubowicz, and Ukrainian-born David Rapoport. They decided to merge three relief organizations in order to pool their meagre resources: the *Colonie Scolaire*, the *La Mère et l'Enfant* dispensary and *Le Cercle Amical*, a Jewish labour soup kitchen.²⁰ Their office was located at 36, Rue Amelot, from which the Committee got its name.

Within a year, Rapoport would be the only one remaining. For reasons that are unclear, Jakoubowicz resigned in May 1941 invoking personal reasons.²¹ A few weeks later, Glaeser was forced to flee Paris to the Non-Occupied Zone when it became known the Gestapo was looking to arrest him. He pursued his activities in the Non-Occupied Zone until June 29, 1944, when he was executed along with

¹⁸ For a brief discussion of the limitations of the Amelot collection, see Jacques Adler, *The Jews of Paris and the Final Solution: Communal Responses and Internal Conflicts, 1940-1944* (New York: New York University Press, 1987), pp. xiv-xv.

¹⁹ "Note biographique et témoignage Léo Glaeser," in David Diamant, ed., *250 combattants de la Résistance témoignent: Témoignages recueillis de septembre 1944 à décembre 1989* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1991), pp. 83-84.

²⁰ *Activité des organisations juives en France sous l'occupation* (Paris: CDJC, 1947), pp. 189-195.

²¹ Rue Amelot Records, 1939-1945 (New York: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1992), folder 8, 38-39; May 9, 1941 and May 12, 1941. Rue Amelot records hereafter cited as RA.

six other Jews in reprisal for the murder of Vichy propaganda minister Philippe Henriot.²²

Rapoport, from his youth, had been a militant in the ranks of the Zionist-Socialists, for a short time leading a group of *Poale Zion*. At the helm of Rue Amelot, he quickly grew to become one of the most venerated figure in the Jewish immigrant community of Paris, and every day a steady procession of Jews from different backgrounds – Russians, Pole, Rumanians – could be seen at his office, asking for various favours.²³ Witnesses agree that Rapoport was a dedicated and generous man who gave everything he had to Rue Amelot and the people it helped. His temerity in the face of numerous warnings from the German authorities – he was summoned to SS Captain Theodor Dannecker’s office on at least two occasions – eventually cost him his life. He was arrested by the Gestapo in his office on June 1, 1943 and deported to his death.²⁴

It should be acknowledged that although it emerged as perhaps the most prominent organization for foreign Parisian Jews, Rue Amelot was by no means the only foreign Jewish group active in the Paris area. As Anny Latour reminds us, “[t]hese networks did not materialize out of thin air, but had their origin in Jewish social services and groups of varying political leanings already in

²² Renée Poznanski, *Les Juifs en France pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Paris: Hachette, 1997), p. 614 107n.

²³ Anny Latour, *The Jewish Resistance in France, 1940-1944* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1981), pp. 45-46.

²⁴ “Témoignage du Dr. Minkowski (1946),” in Diamant, *250 combattants*, pp. 73-76.

existence prior to the Occupation.”²⁵ Other rescue and resistance organizations in France that were administered by and for East European Jews were the ORT and the OSE, both of which had hailed originally from Tsarist Russia and had migrated West with Jews fleeing the pogroms.²⁶ OSE and ORT both operated in Occupied and Vichy France and, as we shall see later, OSE actually collaborated with Rue Amelot in Paris after 1943.²⁷

Another important organization was the Jewish Scout Organisation of France (*Les Éclaireurs Israélites de France*), which grew from merely an amateur organization into a full-fledged resistance outfit in 1940-1941. It maintained children’s homes, found safe havens for refugees and facilitated escape to Switzerland. Its most important section, “The Sixth,” hid the children of foreign Jews in the countryside.²⁸

THE RESPONSE TO OCCUPATION

When the Germans entered Paris, a large part of the population, and most of the Jews, had left the city. Yet in the first months, German policy was surprisingly magnanimous towards the Jews, ushering in a gradual return of the evacuees and a partial resumption of Jewish communal life. In fact, Nazi strategists were restraining the newly appointed German ambassador in Paris, Otto Abetz, who

²⁵ Latour, *Jewish Resistance in France*, p. 11.

²⁶ Kieval, “Legality,” pp. 341-343.

²⁷ *Activité des organisations juives*, pp. 99-180.

²⁸ For more on the Jewish Scout Organisation of France, see Léon Poliakov, “Jewish Resistance in France,” *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science*, vol. 8 (1953), pp. 257-259; Kieval, “Legality,” esp. pp. 347-349; *Activité des organisations juives*, pp. 57-72.

was eager to inaugurate a vigorous anti-Semitic campaign. The Germans moved cautiously, mindful not to disturb local sensibilities and reluctant to put a strain on their already thinly spread troops.²⁹

Little did the Jews expect that anti-Semitic legislation would come not from the Nazis, but from their own government. On July 22, 1940 Vichy created a naturalization revision committee to study the cases of some 500,000 cases of immigrants naturalized since 1927: 15,000 were stripped of their citizenship, 40 percent of whom were Jews. The following October, the Vichy government passed the *Statut des Juifs*, excluding Jews from public service, the army, teaching, the press and limiting their numbers in the liberal professions. Even more ominous were the definition of Jews according to racial, and no longer religious, criteria and the new law authorizing the detention of foreign Jews. In June 1941, Vichy passed the second *Statut*, which broadened the racial criteria to define Jews and, a few months later, announced an “economic aryanization” policy to strip French Jews of their wealth.³⁰ By then, the German authorities had themselves issued, in September, their first racial laws, forcing Jews to register and stamping their papers with the word “Juif.” It is difficult to exaggerate the devastating impact of the racial laws, especially on French Jews who considered themselves so profoundly French.

²⁹ Marrus and Paxton, “The Nazis and the Jews,” p. 695.

³⁰ Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), see chapter one: “First Steps”; Azéma and Bédarida, *La France*, pp. 137-144.

The October 1940 statute authorizing the detention of foreign Jews marked the arrival of a new addition on the French landscape: the detention camps, “*les camps de la honte*” in the words of one historian,³¹ in which chronic starvation, epidemics, sordid hygienic conditions and isolation took a terrible toll on French Jewry. The first round-ups started in May 1941. Before the year was out, 50,000 people were detained in camps across France, 40,000 of which were Jews.³² In August of the same year, Vichy authorities inaugurated the camp of Drancy, in the suburbs of Paris, a place that for many would serve as a way station before reaching Auschwitz. As Marrus and Paxton have argued, the Vichy government’s haste in formulating and implementing anti-Semitic was perhaps not merely driven by its hatred of Jews. Indeed, Vichy was eager to take a hand in the spoliation of Jewish wealth, partly in order to forestall the transfer of Jewish assets from France to the Reich.³³

Meanwhile, Nazi strategists were pleased to see Vichy France embrace the task of Jewish disenfranchisement with such eagerness. Utilizing their experience in Germany, Austria and Poland, the Nazis sought to set up in France a *Judenrat*, by means of which they would impose their will on French Jewry. Since the Germans thought it important to create the impression that the initiative for this action stemmed from the French, negotiations were carried on between the German embassy in Paris and Vichy, which in April 1941 resulted in the

³¹ Anne Grynberg, *Les camps de la honte: Les internés juifs dans les camps français, 1939-1944* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991).

³² Azéma and Bédarida, *La France*, p. 140. Other detainees included the Gypsies, Spanish Republicans and common criminals.

formation of the “General Commissariat for Jewish Affairs” (GCJA) under the direction of a notorious French anti-Semite and war veterans leader, Xavier Vallat.³⁴

Rapoport, as early as September 1940, had recognized the necessity of unification to meet social needs. Rue Amelot had emerged as the most prominent foreign Jewish organization, and he felt that it might be time for a rapprochement with the French Jewish community. He ran into resistance from the Grand Rabbi of Paris Julien Weill, however, who feared that allying native with foreign Jews would only give a reason for the Nazis to persecute them. But the situation changed quickly as the Nazis sought to tighten their grip over French Jewry. A few months later, with the formation of the GCJA, French Jewish leaders were told in no uncertain terms that the Occupation authorities expected all Jewish organizations in the Occupied Zone to unite under a common organization.³⁵

When French Jewish leadership contacted Rue Amelot in April, they had become more amenable to the idea of immigrant leadership and sincerely wanted to prevent a rupture. Rue Amelot leaders Jakoubowicz and Rapoport had been willing to unite in September 1940. The situation, however, was now radically different. Participation in the GCJA implied that community leaders needed to

³³ Marrus and Paxton, “The Nazis and the Jews,” p. 696.

³⁴ Poliakov, “Jewish Resistance,” p. 253. In French, *Commissariat général aux questions juives* (CGQJ).

³⁵ Cohen, *Burden of Conscience* pp. 25-26.

take a pledge of allegiance, and SS commander Dannecker's promises of autonomous existence were hardly convincing, especially after he flew in two Viennese Jews, former members of Vienna's *Judenrat*, to supervise the proceedings. Rue Amelot, after seeking a loophole that would prevent it from accepting subservience to the Occupier, formally resigned from the Commissariat in May.³⁶ Its resignation undermined any legitimacy the GCJA hoped to build in the immigrant Jewish community.

The GCJA, under pressure from the Germans, came back in July, trying to get Rue Amelot to reconsider. GCJA official Elie Krouker sent a blistering letter to Rapoport, reminding him that his "attitude à notre égard a manqué d'élégance, pour ne pas dire plus." He wished to set up a private meeting to examine the new situation and arrive at "un accord fraternel dans l'intérêt général."³⁷ Rapoport, however, refused to yield. He nevertheless kept the channels open, but his mistrust of both German and French Jewish intentions kept a prospective arrangement in the background.

From the start, as Lucien Lazare has stated, Rue Amelot was born with the dual mandate of social solidarity and refusal to submit to Germans orders.³⁸ While Amelot was not contemplating action to break the law at this early date, it did lay the groundwork for a philosophy of resistance. In a memorandum, Rapoport expressed his apprehension about joining a Central Jewish organization under

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-33; Alder, *Jews of Paris*, pp. 66-68.

³⁷ RA, folder 2, 18; July 3, 1941.

the control of the Nazis.³⁹ Rapoport's reluctance to entrust the fate of his organization and his people in such an administrative framework highlights one of the most revealing differences between Foreign and French Jews.

The ACIP (*Association consistatoriale des Israélites de Paris*) was the nucleus around which the native-born French Jews gathered. As historian Renée Poznanski has argued, "it played the game of legality all the way."⁴⁰ Indeed, the fate of the Jews in French society was intimately tied to the support of the nation's republican tradition. Consequently, the various French Jewish organizations were no more inclined than official bodies of French society to partake in the world of clandestine activities. The French *Israelite* political tradition was built on adaptation, not revolt. They placed their fate in the law⁴¹

The immigrant Jews, on the other hand, were a diverse lot – a hodgepodge of Zionist groups, Bundists, Communists, as well as apolitical factions that concentrated on welfare and relief operations. In many respects, they could agree on very little, but they all shared the experience of living – and therefore resisting – under a tyrannical regime. Many of them had been used to operate in clandestinity and for nothing in the world would they have given their names and private information to the government. For the foreign Jew, at the risk of generalization, the state was a potential foe, not a guarantor of liberty.

³⁸ Lucien Lazare, *La résistance juive en France* (Paris: Stock, 1987), p. 52.

³⁹ RA, folder 3, 13-16; undated, but probably spring 1941.

⁴⁰ Renée Poznanski, "The Geopolitics of Jewish Resistance in France," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 15, 2 (Fall 2001), p. 251.

The next step taken by the Occupier was the law creating the Union Générale des Israélites de France (U.G.I.F.) on November 29, 1941. This law made it mandatory for any Jewish organization to register with the U.G.I.F., a new umbrella organization through which the Germans could deal with all Jewish groups. Talks between the U.G.I.F. and Rue Amelot began in January 1942. Rapoport knew very well that he could not hope to pursue an independent course forever without aggravating German authorities, so he reached an agreement with U.G.I.F. leader André Baur to publicly join the U.G.I.F. while securing guarantees concerning Rue Amelot's independence.⁴² Moreover, he obtained insurances from U.G.I.F. leader Marcel Stora that Rue Amelot could continue submitting fabricated welfare list to the Germans.⁴³

PROVIDING COMFORT AND RELIEF, 1940-1942

At first, Rue Amelot did little more than distribute warm meals through its four soup kitchens located in the areas with a heavy concentration of foreign Jews.⁴⁴ In October and December 1940, for instance, 84 percent of its budget was devoted to the soup kitchens. Throughout the fall, 45,000 to 59,000 hot meals per month were being served.⁴⁵ The soup kitchens were not only a convenient

⁴¹ Poznanski, "Reflections," pp. 141-142.

⁴² For a good overview, see Simon Scharzfuchs, *Aux prises avec Vichy: Histoire politique des Juifs de France (1940-1944)* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1998), pp. 157-158; Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, pp. 48-69.

⁴³ Cohen, *Burden of Conscience*, p. 71.

⁴⁴ The four soup kitchens were located on Rue Vieille-du-Temple, Rue Elzévir, Rue Béranger and Rue Richer. RA, folder 4, 1; undated.

⁴⁵ RA, folder 5, 5; undated memo, probably written in December 1940, Roughly half of the meals were given free of charge; the other half was sold for a small amount.

place where Jews could obtain a warm meal and hold social gatherings: it was also an intersection where various activists and resisters could meet to plan clandestine operations and debate politics.⁴⁶

It became quite obvious that with the onset of anti-Jewish discrimination, the demand on the soup kitchens would only increase. Unfortunately, Rue Amelot's finances were shaky. The situation was becoming critical as early as September 1940. In an internal memorandum, Rapoport warned that Rue Amelot's finances "had never been as dire," predicting starvation and disease in the months ahead unless a source of funding could be secured.⁴⁷ One irate doctor complained to Rapoport "If you are going to let the children die of starvation, there's no point sending them to see me."⁴⁸

The main problem was that with the fall of Paris in June, Rue Amelot temporarily lost its main source of funding: the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, invariably referred to as JOINT in Europe. JOINT was a Jewish American organization that provided relief to the Jews of Europe.⁴⁹ JOINT headquarters in Paris were relocated in Marseilles where, in spite of Vichy obstructionism, the organization was allowed to pursue its activities. In the first half of 1942 alone, JOINT distributed over 33 million francs across France. Once

⁴⁶ Poznanski, "Geopolitics," p. 255.

⁴⁷ RA, folder 6, 5-6; September 1940.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁹ For the classic study on the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, see Yehuda Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939-1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981).

JOINT relocated in Marseille and resumed normal activities, Rue Amelot received its share of funding once again.

Rue Amelot's activities were funded at perhaps at 50 to 60 percent by JOINT, depending on the month. A voluminous amount of the organization's correspondence – and Rapoport's time – were spent on local fundraising. Until the summer of 1941, such activities amassed about 150,000 francs per month; after that, they collapsed to between 15,000 and 20,000 francs.⁵⁰ As the numbers of Jews in Paris dwindled, so did the pool of prospective contributors.

Unfortunately, Rue Amelot was left with little else but local sources of funding in the weeks after November 1942, when the Nazis and Italians invaded the Southern part of France. JOINT aid to France now entered its clandestine phase. According to correspondence available in the Rue Amelot collection, it appears that almost all JOINT contributions were channelled through the American Friends Service Committee, the Quakers, who were very active in Occupied Western Europe. Payments usually ranged between 50,000 and 100,000 francs.⁵¹ Jacques Alder has provided evidence that the Quakers funnelled at least part of the money through Switzerland.⁵²

It also seems that JOINT sought to partly solve the problem of channelling funds into Occupied France by promising to reimburse loans after the end of the war.

⁵⁰ Balbran and Bochurberg, *David Rapoport*, p. 77.

⁵¹ Some of the correspondence between David Rapoport and Josiah P. Marvel, delegate from the American Friends Service Committee, can be found in RA, folders 252 and 258.

⁵² Adler, *Jews of Paris*, p. 144.

Starting in spring-summer 1943, receipts start appearing in the Rue Amelot files on which Rapoport stated that “the sum would be used to save the Jewish children of Paris” and that the whole amount would be fully reimbursed to the lender in New York, up to three months after the end of the war and the resumption of normal postal service with the U.S.⁵³

Another important activity sponsored by Rue Amelot was the monitoring of and assistance to detainees in the detention camp system. As was mentioned above, the first round-ups, mostly affecting foreign Jews, started in May 1941. Most of the detainees from Paris and its surroundings were sent to the camps of Pithiviers and Beaune-La-Rolande (Loire), which were located about 80 km from Paris. These crude facilities had originally been built for German prisoners of war in 1939.

Already by the fall of 1941, thousands of Jews were detained in both camps of the Loire Valley, and Rapoport began getting word from the camps that conditions were “extremely difficult” and that camp authorities, in many cases, did not even bother to feed Jewish detainees.⁵⁴ Rue Amelot responded immediately with a plan to supply parcels of food, clothing and other goods to family members who wished to visit their imprisoned loved ones. In these early months, camp security was lax and visits were permitted. This changed after the summer of 1942, when the camps became closed off to visitors, especially Jewish ones. At

⁵³ D. Rapoport to M. Mark, May 7, 1943; RA, folder 2, 43.

⁵⁴ RA, folder 12, 39-40; undated, around September 1941.

this stage, Rue Amelot's responsibilities grew significantly, because it was now the only organization that would ensure the well being of detainees.

Among the numerous tasks accomplished by Rue Amelot with respect to the camps was the unenviable one of relaying letters from prisoners about to be executed to their families.⁵⁵ Rapoport, in concert with other relief agencies, also sent non-Jewish social workers to visit the camps and inspect living conditions. In one letter to the director of the La Lande detention camp (inaptly named "*Centre d'accueil La Lande*"), Rapoport politely protested the appalling state of health and hygiene among Jewish detainees and inquired whether his organization could assist in any way to improve the situation. He requested, as was common procedure for Rue Amelot, a complete list of names of the prisoners and the release of children; also included was check for 4,000 francs, "for the general needs of the detainees (without distinction of nationality or religion)."⁵⁶

Rapoport's optimism and humanitarian concern did not, however, blind him to the sinister rationale behind the internment of Jews. After reading one especially disheartening report on the condition of children and the ill at Pithiviers, he

⁵⁵ See, for instance, the five letters in RA, folder 40 from Jacques Grubaum and others.

⁵⁶ RA, folder 41, 5. It is unclear whether this sum was meant as a bribe, or if Rapoport actually expected camp administrator to relay the funds to his prisoners. If the French civil service's reputation for uncompromising professionalism can be used as any guide, his optimism might not have been misplaced. Similar requests, along with replies, are included in this folder. In other cases, Rapoport petitioned for the immediate release of prisoners with severe or contagious illnesses, a request that was often granted before the summer of 1942.

scrawled on the margins: “which proves that this is not a labour camp but quite simply a detention camp.”⁵⁷

Camp inmates would often write to ask about relatives, inquire if anything might be done to free them, or simply to ask for food parcels to alleviate their hunger. Other products that were in high demand included clothing, shoes, towels, and especially soap.⁵⁸ Conversely, worried relatives often wrote to Rue Amelot to inquire about the condition of loved ones being held in camps; this became an even more important part of Rapoport’s duties after the summer of 1942, when Jews were no longer allowed to visit detainees.⁵⁹ Interestingly, since Jews could no longer reach the camps to deliver letters, medicine, and parcels, Rapoport called upon the French Red Cross for assistance. Under the direction of Red Cross head nurse Mrs. Valency, hundreds of parcels, letters, clothing and medical interventions were made available to Jews in the camps surrounding Paris.⁶⁰

Among Rue Amelot’s other relief activities, Rapoport sought to facilitate emigration for individual Jews and attempted to obtain travel visas, writing most

⁵⁷ RA, folder 41, 19; June 11, 1941.

⁵⁸ Several such letters can be found in RA, folders 40 and 58; also see folder 4, 6; March 12, 1942. In some cases, camp administrators censored the letters; see folder 58, 131; January 14, 1942.

⁵⁹ RA, folder 104.

⁶⁰ RA, folder 47. Up to now, it has been impossible to ascertain how this arrangement came about, and whether the Red Cross was being compensated by Rue Amelot or any other Jewish group.

letters to the American embassy, but also to Argentina and Cuba.⁶¹ But legal immigration from France was immensely difficult and expensive in the early years of the Occupation.⁶² Rue Amelot also operated a web of social workers that would call on widows, seniors and the ill to deliver financial aid; for each visit, the social worker would log an entry into a file.⁶³ Financial aid was also made available to the community's intellectuals, in one case to journalist Jacques Biélinky, just out of detention camp.⁶⁴

In January 1942, Rue Amelot served nearly 40,000 meals through its four soup kitchens, sent 2,000 packages to inmates in the camps of Drancy, Pithiviers, Beaune-la-Rolande, Poitiers, and Monts, distributed over 1,000 items of clothing and provided over 900 free medical consultations in addition to funding an orphanage and a legal services clinic.⁶⁵ By that date, Rapoport had also begun hiding Jewish children with Christian families in the Paris area, in the process quietly crossing the line between accommodation and resistance.

⁶¹ RA, folder 259, 75; January 6, 1941; 76, January 10, 1941; 96, February 11, 1941; 115, March 13, 1941; 139, March 28, 1941. Interestingly, the U.S. informed Rapoport in January 1941 that nothing could be done, but that his government might look favourably to the immigration of intellectuals.

⁶² Zuccotti, *The Holocaust*, p. 49.

⁶³ Several hundred of these logs can be found in RA, folders 98-102.

⁶⁴ RA, folder 103; May 2, 1941. For more of Rue Amelot's assistance to intellectuals in Paris, see RA, folder 6, 27-31.

⁶⁵ RA, folder 18, 10.

1942-1944: RELIEF AND RESISTANCE

On March 27, 1942, the first convoys of Jewish deportees headed east from France, a chilling prelude for the months to come. Responding to pressure to step up the deportation schedule, French authorities began in July 1942 a vast operation code named “*Vent printanier*” in Paris. In two days, over 12,000 foreign Jews, including 4,000 children and 5,800 women, were arrested and detained in horrible conditions, half of them at the camp of Drancy and the other half at the Vel d’Hiv.⁶⁶ Although the number of Jews captured was well below what the Germans expected (partly due to Rue Amelot efforts), the hardships endured by Jewish women and children caused a major popular outcry. Likewise, the introduction of compulsory yellow badges for Jews in June 1942 was met with a mix of hostility against the regulation and sympathy for the plight of Jews across France.⁶⁷ After the summer of 1942, the Germans began complaining against the apathy of French police, who did not pursue Jews with enough zeal.⁶⁸

Similar reactions against the ruthlessness of Nazi Jewish policy occurred across France. In one notorious case near the city of Lyon, referred to as the Venisseux

⁶⁶ Abbreviation for *Vélodrome d’Hiver*, an indoor cycling facility. For the best description of the conditions at Drancy, see Georges Wellers, *Un Juif sous Vichy* (Paris: Éditions Tiresias, 1991), pp. 102-182. Wellers was detained at Drancy before his deportation to the East.

⁶⁷ Both Georges Wellers and Jacques Biélinky, Jews who lived in Paris during the summer of 1942, noticed a shift in popular attitudes towards Jewish discrimination after the introduction of the compulsory star. See Jacques Biélinky, *Journal, 1940-1942: Un journaliste juif à Paris sous l’Occupation* (Paris: Cerf, 1992), pp. 220-224; George Wellers, Testimony at the Trial of Adolph Eichmann, quoted in Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 61; also, Wellers, *Un Juif sous Vichy*, pp. 216-218. Wellers was deported to Auschwitz and survived the

incident, at least 85 Jewish children who were earmarked for deportation were subsequently released through the efforts of *Amitié Chrétienne*, a Young Christian resistance movement.⁶⁹

Evidence of French disillusionment with Nazi anti-Semitic policy was certainly welcome by Jewish groups. However, they were also painfully aware of the novelty of the situation, that Nazi policy had reached a momentous turning point. As for the U.G.I.F., which had even prepared the nametags used for the *Tel d'Hiv* raid, it lost even more credibility in the eyes of foreign Jews; a group of 200 furious women even attacked its offices. Meanwhile, Rue Amelot's flexibility allowed it, in the days before the raid, to discreetly warn the most people possible of the incoming danger.⁷⁰ Yet the raid's aftermath was especially frustrating for Rapoport because authorities shut down Rue Amelot for three weeks, from July 16 to August 5. Rapoport decided to embark on a two-pronged strategy: on one hand, he would move closer to the U.G.I.F., in an attempt to benefit from its protection while at the same time preserving his independence; on the other hand, he realized that legal means alone would no longer suffice against such a ruthless foe.⁷¹ The U.G.I.F. would provide cover for Rue Amelot's expanding clandestine activities.

ordeal, living to be 86 years old. Biélinky did not: he was deported to his death in December 1942.

⁶⁸ Kaspi *Juifs sous l'Occupation*, p. 110.

⁶⁹ Rayski, *Le choix des Juifs*, pp. 139-142.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

⁷¹ Cohen, *Persécutions*, pp. 367-368. U.G.I.F. members were assigned special passes that spared them from the threat of round-ups by police.

In a memo dating from the fall of 1942, Rapoport describes Rue Amelot's relationship with the U.G.I.F. "There has been no notable change in our relationship with the Union. Our independence remains intact, and the U.G.I.F. knows only what we choose to tell its leaders during private conversations; we give them no official reports, and the Union has no idea of both the provenance and the size of our financing."⁷² By then, most Rue Amelot workers had a U.G.I.F. card, and both organizations collaborated closely to provide relief. Rapoport, however, still was unhappy about the Union's policy towards foreign Jews. Although he maintained that contacts between he and the U.G.I.F. leadership were "cordial," he could not say the same thing of "the U.G.I.F.'s very policy, and of certain representatives of that organization towards foreigners, but that is another story."⁷³

A few weeks after the *Grande Rafle* of July 1942, one social worker described the appalling situation of 1,000 children aged from two to fourteen who had been left in the hands of a handful of Jewish adults at Poitiers: that same morning, 1,250 Jewish adults had been deported to Drancy. The fact that the camp director had, by his own admittance, only been given a few hours to prepare for the operation underscores the haphazard and chaotic way in which the deportations were implemented.⁷⁴ The fact that children were now suffering out in the open emboldened him to expand the reach of Rue Amelot's clandestine activities, of which it shall be question below.

⁷² RA, folder 5, 16; undated, almost certainly the fall of 1942.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 17.

At this point, it might be pertinent to inquire whether Rapoport or any other members of his entourage suspected the existence of the Final Solution in the East. They did receive ominous reports, such as one undated memo sent to Rue Amelot that described miserable living conditions, strict discipline and “la construction de hauts fourneaux” in the camps of the East.⁷⁵ On the other hand, Rapoport also received evidence to the effect that conditions in the East were, if not comfortable, at least bearable. One Parisian Jew, writing from a labour camp in High Silesia to which he had been transported in a cattle car, described his working conditions as “not bad”: “Nous ne sommes pas maltraités ici, tout depend du degre d’antisémitisme des chefs militaires et civils . . . qui nous commandent. Je peux dire que sans être absolument bien, je ne suis pas mal.”⁷⁶ Yet by late 1942, several distressing signs were available for all to see. One train started off leaving only this information: “Leaving for an unknown destination. Do not send packages or correspondence.”⁷⁷

But, as was often the case for Western Jews, most chose not to believe the unfathomable. The Communists of the Parisian group Solidarité, who often interacted with Rue Amelot, received detailed reports from Polish Communists about death camps in the East. When Solidarité members tried to convince Rue Amelot this was the truth, Rapoport and his colleagues refused to accept the

⁷⁴ RA, folder 41, 39-40; August 15, 1942.

⁷⁵ RA, folder 40, 1. The memo is undated, but most likely it was written in the fall of 1942.

⁷⁶ RA, folder 41, 85-86; December 20, 1942. One should also consider the possibility, however unlikely, that this letter was fabricated by the Nazis.

veracity of the information and dismissed it as merely another propaganda ploy to mobilize support against fascism.⁷⁸

Solidarité, a relief organization headed by Communists and was created in late 1940, ran a soup kitchen of its own and published a bimonthly newspaper.⁷⁹

Although they had many common goals, many Rue Amelot members were concerned that the Communist stance violence could jeopardize their activities.⁸⁰

As Jacques Adler has pointed out, “In spite of such an understanding of the necessity of achieving communal unity, in spite of Amelot and Solidarity being equally convinced of catastrophic dangers facing the Jews, political differences hampered that unity.”⁸¹

The above discussion about awareness of the Final Solution by Rapoport and Rue Amelot leads us to an interesting point: while they no doubt believed that terrible things were happening in the camps of the East, the fact that Rue Amelot probably did not believe in the existence of a Final Solution begs the question of its motivation for undertaking a risky plan of child concealment and the manufacturing of identification papers. Perhaps the child concealment plan was simply undertaken to spare children the horrors of the deportation camps. On the other hand, perhaps some elements within the organization had acquired and accepted the veracity of information about the Eastern camps.

⁷⁷ RA, folder 57, 40; undated.

⁷⁸ Adler *Jews of Paris*, p. 202.

⁷⁹ Cohen, *Persécutions*, p. 83

⁸⁰ Adler, *Jews of Paris*, pp. 174-175.

By late 1942, two styles of Jewish resistance emerge in Paris: one, Rue Amelot, which pursued clandestine operations under the umbrella of the UGIF; and Solidarité, which embarked on an even more active policy of armed resistance after 1942. Both factions competed for influence among the dwindling numbers of Parisian Jews and although they entertained similar aims, cooperation was ruined by disagreements over politics and tactics.⁸² Moreover, as the stakes became higher, the Amelot Committee itself was experiencing difficulty keeping some of its political factions in check, as we shall see below.

According to some available evidence, Rue Amelot began placing needy children in the countryside to live under different identities with Christian peasants as early as 1941. The peasant women, “*nourrices*,” received a fixed allocation per child per month for their services. In addition, the organization provided clothing, bedding and medical services to the children. It is not clear exactly when this operation began, nor how many Jewish children were hidden this way before July, 1942, the period for which the Rue Amelot collection starts recording child concealment activities.⁸³ In any event, the operation was in full swing by 1943,

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 203-208.

⁸³ There is substantial disagreement among scholars over the actual beginning of the Rue Amelot plan to hide Jewish children in Christian families. Hillel Kieval and Lucien Lazare, author of a respected volume on Jewish rescue in France, both imply that the program began in 1941. Lazare bases his interpretation on a 1941 [no further date] report prepared by Rue Amelot, in turn cited by Jacques Biélinki, which states that as many as 100 children were placed in the countryside in 1941. Since the Rue Amelot records only go back to the summer of 1942, is it reasonable to imply that it might only have started then, as Renée Poznanski suggest? The question is obviously still unresolved, but it seems likely that the program could have had an earlier start. Unfortunately, the O.S.E., which jointly administered the plan with Rue Amelot, did

and between 800 and 1,000 children had been dispersed in Christian families through the joint efforts of Rue Amelot and the O.S.E. An increasing awareness of Nazi intentions coupled with solid trust in Rue Amelot and O.S.E. made the plan perhaps a bit too popular, and both organizations were soon forced to turn back worried parents.

By 1943, Rapoport was reporting that several hundred children were concealed in non-Jewish, mostly Catholic, families. Yet in spite of this relative success, Rue Amelot was going through a difficult period. Three of Rue Amelot's five directors had been arrested, leaving only Rapoport and Yehuda Jakoubowicz in charge of the operations. They soon called in Abraham Alpérine.⁸⁴ Help also came from Dr. Eugène Minkowski, a physician affiliated with the O.S.E., which was also under the loose supervision of the U.G.I.F.⁸⁵ The situation had become especially delicate on January 28, 1943, when the CGQJ decreed that almost all foreign Jews had to be fired from the UGIF and all its subsidiaries by March 31, 1943.⁸⁶

The system under which the identity of hidden children remained secret was quite sophisticated. A code that allowed information regarding the child, his family and his pension was to be kept in separate files, thus protecting the identity of families and children in case of a Gestapo raid. Unfortunately, due to

not leave any records. Kieval, "Legality," p. 353; Lazare, *La résistance juive*, p. 156; Poznanski, *Être Juif en France*, p. 403.

⁸⁴ Aron Kremer and M. Charavner were sent to Drancy while Shapiro [first name unknown], an American citizen, was expelled from the country.

⁸⁵ Latour, *Jewish Resistance*, pp. 42-44.

⁸⁶ RA, folder 240, 25; January 28, 1943.

the incomplete nature of the Rue Amelot collection, historians have been unable to decipher the code. An elaborate system of verification for the condition of children was also established, which sent social workers to pay bimonthly visits to check on the children and see if their “*nourrice*” treated them properly. After each visit, they filed out a log that was then stored in the Rue Amelot files. Social workers looked for hygiene, manners, health, food and the “moral climate” of the household. In many unfortunate cases, children had to be pulled out of an abusive or filthy household (See Appendix).

The concealment of such a large number of children involved a significant amount of work: false papers and false birth certificates had to be manufactured, food stamps had to be found and distributed, and worried parents had to be reassured that it was best for them not to know the location of their children. Henry Bulawko, the young leader Hashomer-Hatzaïr (the Hebrew name for the Youth Guard), a socialist Zionist party, was enrolled by Rapoport and quickly became adept in the art of falsifying identification papers.⁸⁷ Bulawko’s presence within Rue Amelot was apparently not to the liking of all the members of the Committee, most notably the strong Bundist element led by Jakoubowicz and Kramartz. Bulawko’s outspoken Zionist activism, his involvement in numerous clandestine operations, including smuggling young Jews to Palestine, and the publication of numerous anti-fascist tracts⁸⁸ made them worry that he could endanger their whole operation. Bulawko had actually been given the cold

⁸⁷ Bulawko, “Centre Amelot,” pp. 28-33.

⁸⁸ Latour, *Jewish Resistance*, pp. 25-27.

shoulder by Kramartz in early 1941 when the young man first offered his services to Rue Amelot.⁸⁹

Fears about Bulawko's cautiousness were confirmed in November 1942, when he was arrested in spite of his U.G.I.F. identity cards. In a postwar interview, Bulawko was still convinced that his vocal criticism of the U.G.I.F. is probably what got him arrested. One should also consider, however, that the ever-conspicuous young Zionist was also negotiating with the Communists from Solidarité in order to obtain weapons, something that was of direct interest to the authorities.⁹⁰ Within Solidarité, opposition to the U.G.I.F. was even more hostile; Communists like Adam Rayski accused the organization of erecting a "ghetto without walls" that helped Nazi policy.⁹¹ In any event, the detainment of Bulawko led to Rapoport taking over the duty of preparing false identification. This lasted until June 1, 1943, when he was arrested and deported to his death.

After the deportation of Rapoport, Alperine and Jakoubowicz continued administrating Rue Amelot, but their autonomy was short-lived.⁹² A decree placed Rue Amelot under the direct authority of the U.G.I.F. After June 1943, it was out of the question for Rue Amelot to embark on another plan of child dissimulations. Alperine made sure the children that had already been hidden were fed and healthy and waited until the Liberation. Throughout the years, Rue

⁸⁹ RA, folder 10, 27-30; Feb. 20, 1941. Bulawko wrote a scathing five-page letter to Rapoport to denounce Kramartz arrogance.

⁹⁰ "Témoignage de Henry Bulawko sur la lutte armée," in Diamant, *250 combattants*, pp. 186-187.

⁹¹ Rayski, *Le choix des Juifs*, pp. 52-53.

Amelot constantly sought to update the lists of parents who were killed or had been deported. Not surprisingly, many children survived the war to discover they were orphans.⁹³ Most of them were sent to the Jewish orphanage at La Varenne.⁹⁴

CONCLUSION

A report commissioned in 1945 found that Rue Amelot had distributed 850,000 free meals, 21,000 cash payments to the needy, 27,000 free medical consultations, 12,000 free medical supplies and 26,000 clothing items from 1940 to 1945.⁹⁵ Many historians have been so fascinated by the story of the hidden children that they have almost forgotten that Rue Amelot was, for many Parisian Jews, not only a source of material comfort, through its distribution of meals, medicine, and clothing, but also a badge of pride, honour and hope. David Rapoport and his fellow members of rue Amelot were left to represent a community of foreign Jews who had few friends in Nazi and Vichy France. One can only acquiesce to Henry Bulawko's statement that "[Rue] Amelot was a model of dignity, of the refusal to submit to the edicts of Vichy, to the whims of the Occupant."⁹⁶

⁹² Baldran and Bochurberg, *David Rapoport*, p. 200, 222.

⁹³ One such list can be found at RA, folder 190, 16; undated.

⁹⁴ Lazare, *Le résistance juive*, p. 235.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁹⁶ Henri Bulawko, "Le centre Amelot tel que je l'ai vécu," *Monde juif*, 152 (Sept.-Dec. 1994), p. 33.

In addition to portraying inspired leadership, this study also highlighted the tenuous relationship between foreign and French Jews in World War II France. As late as 1943, Rapoport complains of the condescending attitude of French Jews towards his community. It might indeed seem surprising that after all the common hardships endured by French Jews as a whole, a sense of kinship had not developed further. This was in fact to happen in the postwar years. As one prominent Jewish scholar put it, “Among many other victims, several poor and miserable victims, the “status of Jews” has made a conceptual victim. It has killed the French *Israélite*. The Jew has taken its place.”⁹⁷

Of course, many unresolved issues remain for French Jewry during World War II. Commenting on the U.G.I.F.’s controversial role in Vichy France, one historian writing in 1947 remarked that “today, more than two years after the Liberation, the controversy is still raging.”⁹⁸ Today, more than fifty years later, the issue of collaboration under imperfect situations remains as relevant as ever, as recent developments have shown in the Balkans and Rwanda. One can only welcome André Kaspi’s call for French historians to confront the U.G.I.F.’s uncomfortable place in French Jewry’s collective imagery.⁹⁹

“Unlike the war, which left in its wake, death, ruin and suffering, the Occupation inflicted wounds that are more political and moral than physical, wounds that

⁹⁷ Rayski, *Le choix*, p. 338.

⁹⁸ *Activité des organisations juives*, p. 199.

have not yet completely healed.”¹⁰⁰ No doubt Philippe Burrin was, at least in part, referring to the questions of Vichy France and anti-Semitism. While it is certainly not the purpose of this conclusion to assess the historical significance of Vichy France’s anti-Semitism, one should be reminded of two things. First, the vertiginous heights to which popular anti-Semitism rose in the 1930s, laying the ground for Vichy policies. But second, and most importantly, we must consider the precipitous decline of support for anti-Semitic policies after the atrocities of July 1942. One of these rare moments when we can think that there might just be some hope yet.

Appendix 1

Example 1:

39/3/XI/42

18/12/42: Visit delayed because of communication problem.

12/1/43: Clean house. *Nourrice* a bit brusque, but a good person. Has 5 children in her care. Food healthy and plentiful.

The children are well looked after. Very clean.

The pension is a bit tight. I’ve included tickets for new clothes.

25/3/43: Mrs Chyfer has informed us that the *nourrice* is beating the children.

6/4/43: The children were removed in late March.

Example 2:

⁹⁹ The most notable studies are Cohen’s *Burden of Conscience* and Cynthia Haft, *The Bargain and the Bridle: The General Union of the Israelites of France, 1941-1944* (Chicago: Dialog Press, 1983).

¹⁰⁰ Burrin, *La France à l’heure allemande*, p. 8.

WAJNBERG, Albert, born 12/7/36 (Fr)
Father a political prisoner
22/1/43. [...] Left 31/7/43

25/1/43: U.G.I.F. informed us [that this child needed a home]

1/2/43: Well kept. Child seems to get use to surroundings, but still keeps to himself. Well schooled. Obedient. Well dressed. A bit pale. Some lumps on the neck. Right eyelid partly shut (congenital paralysis?)

25/3/43: Good physical condition. Vigorous look. Still wets bed.

22/4/43: Vigorous look, perhaps had gained a kilog[ram], well schooled. Dressed like his brother.

20/5/43: Handsome child. Good physical condition, good posture. Used to surroundings.

19/6/43: Nothing to report.¹⁰¹

Appendix 2:

David Rapoport, responding to a group of young Jewish students being held at Beaune-la Rolande for whom he could not honour a request for a more generous package:

Mes amis la vie est belle
malgré les peines
qui nous enchainent [*sic*]
voix légères
ames [*sic*] claires
sans un sou au fond de l'escarcelle
chantons au soleil qui ruisselle
la vie est belle
belle toujours.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Example 1 from RA folder 182, 229; Example 2 from RA folder 183, 37[?].

¹⁰² RA, folder 18, 17; April 14, 1942.