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## The Daily Life of a Propagandist at the Paris Bureau of the Jewish National Fund (K.K.L.) (1926- 1936)

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## **The Daily Life of a Propagandist at the Paris Bureau of the Jewish National Fund (K.K.L.)(1926- 1936)**

The abundant archives at the Jewish National Fund (*Keren Kayemet Le-Israel*) in Jerusalem<sup>1</sup> shed light on the activities of these associations in the Diaspora to promote the purchase of land in Palestine. A large collection of documents concerning France is available on microfilm<sup>2</sup> and illustrates the intense involvement of the Paris K.K.L. Bureau from 1925-1936, through the close relationship between two men, the key members of the association: Aimé Pallière, its vice president, and Joseph Fisher, its commissioner-general. They corresponded practically every day (scribbled notes, telegrams, reminders of meetings, minutes of meetings with annotations). In addition these documents provide a glimpse of the difficulties of being a Zionist propagandist, which was Pallière's role in France and abroad for almost ten years. In 1925, the Jerusalem executive board sent Joseph Fisher<sup>3</sup> to set up the K.K.L. Paris bureau. Officially founded on May 16, 1925, and restructured on May 25, 1926 following a meeting that brought together twenty of the Zionist associations in Paris which supported its goals, the Jewish National Fund proceeded to hold elections for its Paris executive board on June 24, 1926. A lawyer, Marcel Mirtil, a member of the Central Consistory, was appointed president and Aime Palliere was elected vice president.<sup>4</sup>

### **Aimé Pallière (1868-1949) Paris Bureau Propagandist**

A liberal Christian and Semitist, A. Pallière was a main figure in Judaism in the period between the two World Wars. Without ever converting to Judaism, he was one of the founders of the Reform Jewish Union in 1907 and as of 1922 became the assistant lecturer under Rabbi Louis-Germain Levy (1870-1946) at the Reform Synagogue on Copemic Street. I will be dealing with his role as propagandist for the K.K.L. and the means made available to him by the Zionist organization, rather than presenting his life story. When writing his memoirs, Pallière emphasized the initial motivation for his activities in the K.K.L.: "I always preferred my work at the Keren Kayemet because it had its basis in the Torah itself and its duty in the unbroken tradition of Israel. In the light cast gradually by events over my entire destiny, I grasped the meaning of the kiss which I, as a young child, gave to flowers

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<sup>1</sup> The K.K.L. archives are located in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem; henceforth: C.Z.A.

<sup>2</sup> Thanks to two scholarships, each for a period of one month, awarded to researchers by the Centre de recherche français de Jérusalem, I was able to have direct access to these documents, which were believed lost: "they are in fact copies of part of the documentation stolen in June 1940 by the German army and rediscovered in the notorious 'Special Archives' in Moscow where they were hidden until the early 1990's", Simone Schilachter, "Les Archives sionistes centrales ; Jérusalem et l'histoire des Juifs de France," in *Archives Juives*, n. 30/2, 2nd semester, 1997, pp. 115-118.

I consulted the microfilm series classified C.Z.A., C.M. 46/71 to C.M. 46/743 dealing with the archives of the Jewish National Fund in France: C.M. 46/73: salaries paid by the association; from C.M. 46/6 to C.M. 46/34: list of donations to the K.K.L. by city in France and by French province from 1922 to 1940; C.M. 46/35 to C.M. 46/43: complete correspondence of Joseph Fisher classified in alphabetical order from 1928 to 1936. This correspondence is partially preserved for 1937 in C.M. 46/71 and for 1938 in CM 46/2. The nature of this article makes it impossible to provide the references for each individual document contained in this correspondence. Only those documents requiring commentary are indicated in the notes.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Fisher was permanent commissioner general of the K.K.L. in France because he would only retire in 1950, see *Bulletin des communautés*, tome VI, 1950. n. 13, p. 4. As of 1925, he became one of the key figures in the French Zionist movement.

<sup>4</sup> C.Z.A., C.M. 46/35, doc 427; statement filed at the Paris Prefecture of Police, July 9, 1926 declaring it to be a non-profit association under the law of 1901, founded May 16, 1925. The vote on June 24, 1926 designated Mr. Mirtil as president, Aimé Pallière as vice president, Vladimir Tiomkine, Pierre Levi, Alfred Aftalion as treasurer, Yehoshua Fisher, treasurer. Minutes of Meeting of June 24, 1926, C.Z.A., K.K.L., 5/466.

brought back from the Holy Land.”<sup>5</sup> The terms chosen to describe Palestine are indicative of the degree of sacredness of his commitment as a religious Zionist. Fisher, on the other hand was political and very pragmatic, and used this to make contacts, as of 1925, with the reform and orthodox communities of the Capital who were a-priori opposed to such initiatives. Pallière rallied the faithful of the Copernic synagogue, such as André Baur<sup>6</sup>, who became treasurer of the K.K.L. in 1927 or 1928 and who opened the doors to salons such as those hosted by gentlewomen like Mrs. Alfred Schwob, Mrs. Henry Leven and Alice Blum. His duties as lecturer at *Chema Israel*<sup>7</sup> enabled him to infuse Zionist ideas into the orthodox community and to have personal contact with Rabbis whom he regularly heard, such as Jules Bauer (1868-1931) and Maurice Liber (1884-1956), both of whom were successively the principals of the Vauquelin Street Rabbinical School.

Fisher often availed himself of Pallière’s diplomatic talent. His advice, translations<sup>8</sup>, articles<sup>9</sup> and letters of thanks for donations or to rabbis or journalists<sup>10</sup> who made statements favorable to Zionism are found throughout their correspondence. Fisher wanted his advice on everything.<sup>11</sup> They apparently met often, alone at La Chope, the Lutetia Bar, to finalize strategies, motions to submit to the Central Committee of the K.K.L., lecture programs and public events. Little by little, while heading at the same time a Zionist Youth Association (the U.U.J.J.<sup>12</sup>), Pallière became an official spokesperson for the Paris bureau, as were for example Fanny Weil and Yvonne Netter. These three individuals could be found on speaking tours in France and French North Africa in 1931<sup>13</sup>, for the Jewish National Fund, with a clearly defined role, a budget and very specific goals, which are described below.

### Films Promoting the K.K.L.

Publicity for the Jewish National Fund primarily took the form of speeches. Members of the executive board and the Central Committee went on speaking tours in various cities in the provinces or abroad.<sup>14</sup> These representatives were mandated specially to address very well chosen audiences. Pallière was sent to speak to the Orthodox or youth associations, whereas Yvonne Netter<sup>15</sup>, a lawyer, addressed women's associations and Fanny Weil met with children in schools. In all these cases,

<sup>5</sup> Aimé Pallière, *Le sanctuaire inconnu. Ma “conversion” au judaïsme*, Éditions de Minuit, 1950, p. 223.

[English edition: *The Unknown Sanctuary. A Pilgrimage from Rome to Israel*, New York, Bloch Publishing Company, 1928, reprinted 1985]

<sup>6</sup> André Baur (March 8, 1904 - March 13, 1944) son of the banker Charles Baur (1862-1927) and Rachel Weill (1870-1951) sister of Julien Weill (1871-1950), Chief Rabbi of Paris, was close to Pallière. He became president of Copernic just before World War II, and took over the presidency of UGIF-Nord until his deportation with his wife Odette Pierre-Kahn (1910-1943) and their four children. They all perished in Auschwitz.

<sup>7</sup> Association for Religious Education founded in 1919 by Maurice Liber, the Rabbi of the Victoire Synagogue from 1920-1932. Sunday mornings, lectures were given in the consistory auditorium for Orthodox youth.

<sup>8</sup> Pallière spoke and wrote fluent Italian, German and Hebrew.

<sup>9</sup> For instance: C.Z.A., C.M. 467/38, doc. 423 from Fisher to Pallière, November 8, 1928: “(...) if your article is ready, I would appreciate it if you could give it to the bearer of this letter.”

<sup>10</sup> For instance: C.Z.A., C.M. 467/36, doc. 475 from Pallière to Fisher, April 8, 1927 and 477 from Fisher to Pallière, April 12, 1927: thank you letter from Pallière to M. Jaim Azancot, the Paris correspondent from the *Renacimiento de Israel*, who wrote an article supporting the activities of the K.K.L. in Spanish Morocco. Fisher had the text typed, Pallière indicates his support by signing it.

<sup>11</sup> For instance: C.Z.A., C.M. 467/37, doc. 522, from Fisher to Pallière, December 19, 1927. “The situation has become more complicated currently in Tunisia and I must have your advice as to future steps.” In the same letter, Fisher asks Pallière for his advice on the elimination of the position of assistant secretary of the K.K.L.

<sup>12</sup> Pallière was elected president of Union Universelle de la Jeunesse Juive, (U.U.J.J.) on August 6, 1926 and remained so until the association ceased to exist in 1935; see Catherine Poujol, “Aimé Pallière, the Paradox of a Christian President of the U.U.J.J.”, *Bulletin du Centre de recherche français de Jérusalem*, n°5. Autumn 1999, pp. 97-104.

<sup>13</sup> C.Z.A. C.M. 467/41; list of expenses, October-November 1931; trip by Fanny Weil to Morocco, November 1931; trip by Aimé Pallière: Belfort, Mulhouse and Luxembourg, and December 1931, trip by Yvonne Netter to Tunisia.

<sup>14</sup> According to the C.Z.A., C.M. 467/1, “K.K.L. Explanatory Bulletin”, dated 1936.

<sup>15</sup> Yvonne Netter (April 10, 1889-August 30, 1985) lawyer, militant feminist, she presided the French section of WIZO (Women’s International Zionist Organization). See biographical note by Catherine Nicault, *Archives Juives* 28/2, 2<sup>nd</sup> semester, 1995, pp. 116--121.

Fisher organized the speaking tours, found auditoriums, and drew up the programs. Brochures, documentation, calendars, and post cards were supplied to the representatives.

The main attraction was obviously the screening of films shot in Palestine showing work on the Kibbutzim or Jewish National Fund projects. Pallière began his career as propagandist for the K.K.L. (after being asked to do so by various organizations such as *Chema* or *Emuna*) by a speaking tour in March 1925 which took him from Marseille to Luxemburg, via Nice, Strasbourg and Metz, including film screenings. In the archives, a number of titles of these K.K.L. promotional films are listed. For instance, Pallière rented *Modern Judea* in February 1927 for a U.U.J.J. evening, after its debut at a banquet held on January 27, 1927 in honor of Nahum Sokolov, the president of the Zionist executive, who, returning from a long promotional mission in Africa, Asia and Central Europe, was to preside the 30<sup>th</sup>, at the Jubilee of the 25 years of K.K.L. at the Trocadero Palace.<sup>16</sup> During the banquet festivities, Victor Bash, Leon Blum and Joseph Ascher all spoke. Pallière also narrated a presentation of the pictures from the *Funeral of Max Nordau*, on January 20, 1929, and, just after his return from a speaking trip in Germany in February, presented *Springtime in Palestine* on February 24, 1929 at the Majestic Hotel, three times in a row.<sup>17</sup>

The years 1927-1928 marked what was known as the “Jewish craze” in Paris. Edmund Fleg published *Pourquoi je suis juif*<sup>18</sup> and André Spire, *Quelques Juifs et demi-Juifs*<sup>19</sup>; and films with Jewish themes were even shown in a few movie houses on the Grands Boulevards. The K.K.L. took advantage of this trend and increased the number of screenings with the obvious purpose of garnering larger donations. They also knew how to tap the emotions. A documentary made immediately after the riots of August 1929 in Palestine, *Nous nous leverons et nous batirons* [‘we will raise up and we will build’] was a hit in March 1930. A successful slide show was produced of pictures of *Inauguration of the Hebrew University by Lord Balfour* as well as a documentary on a children's village *Kfar Yeladim* filmed at Ben Shemen, with the Utopian subtitle: *A child's republic in Palestine*.

### Means of Collecting Donations

There were many means of collecting donations. Before a lecture or a screening, the speaker, with the help of a few devoted individuals, set up stands at the back of the hall. Requests were made for donations to the K.K.L. Golden Book. The idea was to write the name of a well-known pro-Zionist figure and make donations to pay for his or her membership dues.<sup>20</sup> The books were deposited solemnly in Jerusalem as a permanent way of honoring this individual. There were also donations of trees for the reforestation of Eretz Israel and the Central Committee had a detailed map of all the tree planting sites<sup>21</sup>. The very popular “blue boxes” (or blue piggybanks) were placed permanently by the hundreds in shops or in homes. There was also a ‘luxury’ version, and folders for children. The holder promised to donate a set minimum sum and the “box emptier” had to be “a committed Zionist.” He or she needed to engage in discussions with the donor and inform him/her of K.K.L. progress in Palestine. Stamps were sold after meetings; these were supposed to be pasted on letters, documents and fliers. The stamps featured the portraits of famous people. K.K.L. telegrams were also sold as well as “benefactor books” (*pinkassim*) that were started in Zionist families at events such as marriages or engagements. Each guest committed himself a certain sum and signed the book. Later in 1934, the “child’s book” (*sefer hayeled*) appeared. All the important events in the life of the future Zionist were recorded and a sum of money was donated to the K.K.L. that day. Badges were also sold in the hall at

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<sup>16</sup> C.Z.A., C.M. 467/37, doc.36, flier for the Jubilee evening on January 30, 1927.

<sup>17</sup> *La Terre Retrouvée*, February, 1929 n. 4 and C.Z.A., C.M. 467/39, doc.427 and doc.358 from Fisher to Pallière, February 1, 1929: Fisher congratulates Pallière since the *Judische Rundschau* talks about his success in Germany and reminds him about the screening on February 24, 1929 at the Majestic.

<sup>18</sup> Edmund Fleg, *Pourquoi je suis Juif*. Paris, les Éditions de France, “Leurs Raisons”, 1928. See article by Catherine Fhima, “Aux sources d’un renouveau identitaire juif en France, André Spire et Edmond Fleg”, *Mil Neuf Cent*, 1995 n. 13, pp. 171-189.

<sup>19</sup> André Spire, *Quelques Juifs et demi-Juifs*, Paris, Grasset, 1928.

<sup>20</sup> C.Z.A., C.M. 467/1, in the “K.K.L. Instruction Bulletin” dated 1936, the amount listed for that date was 2,500 francs; 17,000 people were listed in the Golden Book, which filled five volumes.

<sup>21</sup> In 1936, this same “Instruction Bulletin” specifies that the price of trees was 25 francs each. The price was 50 francs in 1929, see C.Z.A., C.M. 467/39, doc. 54, October 10, 1929. A diploma was given for five trees planted, and the name of the donor was placed on the site for donations of 100 trees.

every Zionist meeting, and it was considered good taste to wear one when visiting Palestine.

The only way to make these sales and collect donations from each row of seats was to begin before the audience left at the end of the lecture. This is why Fisher was interested in youth groups and asked them for their help. For instance, on November 16, 1927, the youth group members failed to show up on time, and there were no takings that night. The Zionist Federation of France, who had organized the evening, explained that no money was collected for the K.K.L. "because of the absence the young men and women from the UJJ and the Histadrut, whose assistance is indispensable for our ticket-taking and collection activities..."

### **Times and Places for Collecting Donations**

The Jewish holidays were obviously the high points for Zionist promotional activities and special stands were set up to sell Palestinian products, such as honey in small glasses before Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year), and willow branches for Sukkot (the Feast of Booths). The month of Tishri (September/October) was set aside exclusively for collecting donations to the K.K.L. and Pallière did his utmost to be allowed to enter synagogues, borrow Torah scrolls or convince a rabbi to attend a meeting, in order to give lectures in makeshift places of worship in tents or auditoriums transformed into "K.K.L. prayer<sup>22</sup> houses", as in September 1932 at the Paris Municipal Conference Hall. Because the largest donations were made on Yom Kippur, the Central Committee tried more or less successfully, as was done in America, to sell seats in synagogues. "Entrance tickets were sold beforehand, and a K.K.L. stamp was pasted on them." Over time, the K.K.L. was able to collect between 5 % and 25 % of its annual donations, but it was an uphill battle. The central committee archives in Paris have records of sharp rebuttals in 1928 from the Consistory in the capital and from the Chief Rabbi of Marseille, refusing to let the K.K.L. collect donations. In July, Fisher wrote to Pallière suggesting he should send a delegation to both places to plead their case, because the month of Tishri was fast approaching.

The K.K.L. came to view Hannukah (The Feast of Lights) in December as the national holiday of the future Israel. It held special drives at that time such as donation campaigns, and gifts for candle lighting sold by the K.K.L. This was easier in secular communities and it was known that Fisher had planned for Pallière to lecture on December 25, 1927 in Nancy. He was supposed to have given "a talk on the Hasmonean Festival, and on the reconstruction of Palestine" with a slide show on the agricultural settlements and the cities of Eretz Israel, upon invitation from the Association of Jewish Students of the city, as a benefit for the K.K.L.<sup>23</sup> Pallière however fell and sprained his ankle, forcing Fisher to cancel the meeting. For the other Jewish holidays, the K.K.L. sold "Palestinian" costumes for the costume ball on Purim, fruit juice for Tu B'shvat (the holiday of the trees), celebrated on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Shevat (January-February). Lag Ba'omer, celebrated on May 18<sup>th</sup> was devoted to "Palestinian Working Youth Day in Eretz Israel." Lag Ba'omer was also a day for trips, whereas the WIZO ladies gave the holiday a more cultural feel, by inviting writers and artists.

The K.K.L. balls, concerts and benefit performances were also excellent times for collecting donations. In May 1933, Fisher asked Joseph Kessel to write an article that would be published in Paris newspapers on Tchirikoff's *Les Juifs*, a play that was currently at the Vieux Colombier theater and performed by Georges Pitoeff's troupe. Pitoeff donated one evening's takings to the K.K.L.<sup>24</sup> Another event was the attractive Palestinian Bazaar held once a year in Paris and in the provincial cities. The Bazaar primarily sold Palestinian products but the economy in Palestine was at times so

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<sup>22</sup> C.Z.A., C.M. 467/39, doc. 632, from the K.K.L. *Univers Israélite*, October 22, 1928. Request for publication: minutes of the Tishri campaign for the month of September 1928, contribution total: 61,682 francs. The total amount collected for the previous year (October 1927-October 1928) was considered to be very good for France: 450,243 francs.

<sup>23</sup> C.Z.A. C.M. 467/37, doc. 53, from Fisher to Beilin, December 5, 1927. Document 529 from Fisher to Pallière, December 7, 1927, document 526 which objects to the date chosen by Fisher because it would force him to leave on a Friday night, and hence violate the Sabbath: "the day is not convenient..."

<sup>24</sup> C.Z.A. CM 467/43, doc 276 from Fisher to Joseph Kessel, May 28, 1933. The article Fisher asks him to write is obviously unpaid. Given that Kessel was already being paid 400 francs per article in 1926 by *Le Journal* for his trip to the Middle East and that he earned 5,000 francs per month in 1925, when the average salary was 20,000 francs per year, this unpaid particle was indeed a very generous gift to the Zionist cause by this senior reporter (see Yves Courrière, *Joseph Kessel ou sur la piste du Lyon*, Paris, Plon, 1985, p. 245 and 251).

weak that this type of shipment was uncertain, which meant improvising an “artistic stand” of ladies’ handicrafts. The Bazaar day was meant to be an official ceremony, where city notables were invited, the building was draped with flags in the Zionist colors, there was a buffet dinner with flowers, and waiters dressed in blue and white. Door prizes, entertainment, paid (“but inexpensive”) entrance fees were designed to attract large Jewish crowds.

### **The tough life of a K.K.L. star lecturer**

A key feature of these events was obviously the popularity of the speaker, sent to uplift the political and cultural level of the Bazaar, concert or film screening. It is easy to imagine how tired these men and women must have been after spending long hours on the train to reach their destinations on time. For example, Fisher asked Pallière, on December 14, 1928, to leave Paris at 8:45 to get to Colmar at 15:48, where there were connecting trains to Haguenau where he was to speak that evening. This meant Pallière would spend a whole day in the train, in order to speak for several hours in the city, and then return the next day, because Fisher was not always able to set up combined speaking tours. Pallière apparently received small lecture stipends and reimbursement of his traveling costs. Fisher sent the money to the organizers of the Zionist meetings in the provinces, who then added what they wanted or were able to do. Aside from numerous one-day trips to the provinces for a single promotional evening. Fisher set up four exhausting money raising tours<sup>25</sup> in France and abroad between 1925 and 1931, exclusively for the Jewish National Fund.

From his beginnings with speaking tours in the provinces and abroad in 1925, Pallière gradually became the K.K.L.’s star speaker. Fisher, as we have seen, used his connections with the rabbinate to handle such sensitive issues as the loaning of Torah scrolls, collecting donations in the synagogues, setting dates for evening events in the communities or placing donation boxes. At times, however, Pallière's efforts as a go-between were not sufficient. For instance, beginning in 1928, Fisher tried unsuccessfully to convince Chief Rabbi Primer of Besançon to let him organize a promotional evening for the K.K.L. including the screening of a movie. The situation appeared to be more favorable when a certain Mr. Oderberg founded a “Zionist Club” in the city. The club asked to take advantage of Pallière’s presence in Besançon to give lectures at *Chema Israel* in March 1930, to host him in his capacity as vice president of the K.K.L. The religious community did not however agree to authorize the event. After an exchange of letters and a meeting between Pallière and Chief Rabbi Pruner in December 1930 that lessened apprehensions, an evening was finally set for January 4, 1931 – but Pallière fell sick. Fisher had planned a whole speaking tour from Lyon to Dijon, with a stop-over in Belfort, and had been able to squeeze in Besançon. For this reason, he suggested replacing Pallière. This appeared to be out of the question, and Fisher received a stinging reply from the Belfort community: “We feel it necessary to tell you that many people whom we were able to interest in the work of the K.K.L. asked to hear Mr. Aimé Pallière (...). We are convinced that this would be in the best interests of the K.K.L.” Fisher, annoyed, canceled the whole speaking tour.

Pallière was thus the star speaker of the K.K.L., as confirmed by his presence at large public gatherings. In May 1930, the K.K.L. even organized a meeting “in his honor” where he would give a lecture followed by festivities. The date was finally set for May 18, squeezing the event into Pallière's busy *Chema* lecture engagement schedule and the preparations for the Jewish holidays.

### **A Public Relations Role**

Because Pallière was well-known, in demand, and appreciated by all, Fisher called on him to thank famous individuals who were favorable to the cause. Pallière was the one to find the right words<sup>26</sup> in a letter asking *Univers Israélite* to publish K.K.L. news. There was also a need for someone who could complain when the Consistory weekly, which was fairly anti-Zionist, took the liberty of altering a text

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<sup>25</sup> Speaking tours by Pallière solely for the K.K.L.: I. March, 1925, speaking engagements in France and Luxembourg; II. October-November 1928, speaking tour in Switzerland and in Alsace-Lorraine; III. January 1929, speaking tour in Alsace, Germany and Bavaria; IV. March 1929, speaking tour in North Africa; V. November 1931, speaking tour in France and Luxembourg.

<sup>26</sup> C.Z.A., C.M. 467/41, doc. 425 from Fisher to Pallière, March 5, 1930. “Please find enclosed a copy of our letter to the executive board of the UI (...) Apparently, for our approach to be successful, it would be better for you to write a few lines yourself on a piece of K.K.L. paper which we will include with our letter (...)

written by Pallière for Rosh Hashanah 1928, replacing the word “Jews” by “Israelites”— a subtle detail which clearly showed where the battle ground was located. Six years later, in September 1934, Pallière again wrote an article to extend the best wishes of the K.K.L. to *Univers Israélite*, which was celebrating its 90 years of existence. Between times things had changed and Pisher asked him to stress “the changes in the magazine” as regards Zionism, “because since Mr. Milbauer<sup>27</sup> became editor in chief, the editorial board has adopted an attitude of benevolent neutrality. Mr. Milbauer has done us many favors in the columns of his paper,” Pallière diligently wrote an article where he praised the liveliness of the magazine and its friendly, almost ‘family’ style, before saluting the magazine's new policy supporting Zionism. “For some time now, under editorial leadership which is as discrete as it is intelligent, *Univers Israélite* has shown a positive interest in the work accomplished in Palestine. It has welcomed K.K.L. announcements and all the articles informing its readership of the impact of these efforts.”

Pallière was also in charge of meeting important donors, such as Mrs. Bernheim from Mulhouse who expressed the wish to commemorate the name of her husband in Palestine. For 50,000 francs, the central committee suggested founding a work camp. Each year a Kaddish (prayer for the dead) would be said on the anniversary of the death of her husband, in the synagogue of a nearby Settlement. Mrs. Bernheim did not respond to this proposal and Pisher asked Pallière, who accepted, to visit her in Mulhouse while on a speaking tour in November 1931.

As another feather in his cap, Pallière sometimes spoke during public events organized by the K.K.L. He hardly ever accepted because he had a soft voice that did not carry, which served him better in smaller places, such as in “meditations” in synagogues. He always preferred writing to speaking and although he rarely addressed large crowds, in all cases he helped organize these events and wrote articles in the Jewish press. Here are a few examples.

### **Speaker at K.K.L. public meetings**

On the eve of the XVI Zionist Congress that was held in Zurich from August 11-14, 1929, the Zionist executive committee planned major celebrations for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Herzl, on July 3, 1929. The World Zionist Organization needed a federating event at the start of a Congress where it had succeeded in bringing together non-Zionist Jewish organizations for the purpose of expanding the Jewish Agency, in line with the stipulations of the British Mandate. Thus strengthened, it would better represent the Jewish community in Palestine in its dealings with the British authorities, foreign governments and international organizations.

The commemoration was to be Impressive and take place simultaneously abroad, in Paris, and in several provincial cities, with the help of all the Zionist organizations. To unify the event, it was decided to ask famous people to write a few lines about Herzl. These same texts would be read all over the world during the commemoration. Rabbis, historians, writers, scientists, poets and Nobel laureates were contacted. The list is of interest here because it is indicative of Pallière’s international acclaim, because he was included. In the order that their texts were read, the following public figures responded: Sigmund Freud, Bernard Shaw, Stephan Zweig, Mahum Sokolov, Justin Godart, David Prato, Albert Einstein, Simon Dubnov, I. Klausner, Aimé Pallière, R. Avernheimer, Emile Vandervelde, Fernand Corcos, George Bernhard, Paul-Louis Couchoud, Max Brod, J. Wilenski, A.D. Stern, I. Nacht.<sup>28</sup> Pallière’s message, as one of the celebrities, was read along with the major supporters of the Zionist cause. The message differs slightly in its tone, stating that even as “a pure product of emancipated Zionism” and apparently conducting his activities at a distance from all religious ideas, Herzl could not escape his mission. Pallière saw Herzl as a new incarnation of the prophetic voice of Israel through which “God speaks to His people” and he saw a divine hand guiding

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<sup>27</sup> Joseph Milbauer was a French poet and the translator of Bialik, who published a poem on Chanukah, for the first time, in *Univers Israélite* in 1927. Commissioned by the magazine to conduct a survey on the Jewish immigrants of Belleville, Montmartre and Ménilmontant, Rabbi Maurice Liber, then editor in chief took an interest in his work and made him executive secretary. He became editor in chief of UI in 1932, when the Chief Rabbi was appointed Principal of the seminary on the Rue Vauquelin, on January 18, 1932. A committed Zionist, his views impacted on the Consistory magazine’s editorial policy. He settled in Israel in 1948, according to Milbauer, *Souvenances*, Jerusalem, vol. I, 1961 and volume II, 1967.

<sup>28</sup> C.Z.A., F9/30: file with list, texts by the authors, and photos.

Herz's life, unbeknownst to him.

Pallièrè returned to this theme in a speech he gave during the ceremony in Paris on July 3, in the presence of Edmond Fleg, Justin Godart, professors Hadamard and Langevin and Rabbis Julien Weill (Orthodox) and Louis-Germain Levy (Reform) who had also written texts for Fisher. On the 4<sup>th</sup>, he went with Fisher to a lecture given by a Mr. Belkind. There, they both make an appeal to plant trees in honor of Herzl and collected addresses of potential donors. On the 8<sup>th</sup>, Pallièrè spoke during the annual pilgrimage of the Friends of Max Nordau and Marmorek; on the 10<sup>th</sup> he delivered another speech in the Great Hall of the Scientific Society where Herzl's death was commemorated once again as was Marmorek's, just before leaving for Zurich for the start of the XVI Zionist Congress.

Four days before the riots of August 19, 1929 took place in Palestine which would decimate the Jewish and Arab communities (133 Jews and 116 Moslem Arabs), and take all by surprise, there was much self-congratulation in Zurich. Fisher stayed until the end of the Congress and was elected substitute representative of the Jewish Agency. He wrote enthusiastically from Zurich to Pallièrè who was tired and went home for a few days' rest in Nice, and who had asked him for news. "I must tell you, my dear Mr. Pallièrè, that I am extremely satisfied with the Congress and in particular with the Jewish Agency despite the hesitations I have always had as regards this organization (or rather the form of its constitution)." It was also a fruitful meeting for Pallièrè, at the peak of his popularity. He met Rabbi Stephen Wise<sup>29</sup>, who invited him for a vast speaking tour in America. He would leave in 1929, determined to make a trip that, despite the Depression of 1929 in the USA, would astound him...

Following the riots of August 1929, the Mandate administration in Palestine began by halting all immigration, and in March 1930, the report of the Shaw commission attempted to determine the causes of the riots. The experts' conclusions prompted Lord Passfield in August to publish a White Paper that further reduced Jewish immigration and financial transactions in Palestine.<sup>30</sup> In the aftermath of these decisions, the Zionists believed it was necessary to remind the public of Britain's commitments by a "Balfour Campaign", and in Paris a great deal of energy was expended on an evening honoring Lord Balfour, April 3, 1930. The initiative was taken by the Zionist Federation and the K.K.L., and was supported by France-Palestine. Senator Justin Godart<sup>31</sup> accepted to preside over the evening that was held in the auditorium of the Palais d'Orsay. Paul Painlevé, a former minister and the diplomat Henri de Jouvenel were invited and Pallièrè wrote an appeal for a Balfour "Golden Book". Who attended this event?

The archives of the Paris bureau do not provide information on the audience or on whether the invited speakers actually attended. We often have letters from Fisher but not the replies. Asking a political figure to speak does not necessarily mean that he will accept or that there will be a large audience to hear him. Overall, the "Balfour Campaign" launched internationally by the K.K.L. in March-April 1930 was a failure. Paradoxically only the *Yishuv*, although affected directly by Mandate moves, responded better than all the Diaspora countries, with 90 registrants in the Golden Book, according to a confidential message sent by the Jerusalem Central Committee. The reasons given were fatigue and overly frequent solicitation, but the National Fund refused to stop the campaign "that would be solemnly proclaiming the rendition of the Jewish people to the threats from a malevolent power."<sup>32</sup>

Some Parisian events were doubtless a fiasco, despite the amount of energy put into them. This was the case for the commemoration in honor of Aristide Briand, Charles Gide<sup>33</sup> and Albert Thomas<sup>34</sup> on

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<sup>29</sup> Stephen Wise (March 17, 1874-April 19, 1949) American reform Rabbi and committed Zionist, he headed numerous associations and was the Rabbi of the Free Synagogue of New York. He founded the Jewish Institute of Religion and was one of the cofounders of the World Jewish Congress.

<sup>30</sup> See Catherine Nicault, *La France et le sionisme, Une rencontre manquée ? (1897-1948)* Paris, Calman Levy, 1992, pp. 161-163.

<sup>31</sup> C.Z.A. C.M. 467/40 invitation box. Senator Justin Godart was the president of the France-Palestine Association, the future France-Israël.

<sup>32</sup> C.Z.A., C.M. 467/1 from the Jerusalem K.K.L. to committee heads of the K.K.L., June 24, 1930.

<sup>33</sup> Charles Gide (1847-1932) was one of the founders of Protestant-cooperative school Social Christianity, known as the Nîmes School. In favor of the causes of nationalities, he also joined, as did M. Moutet, the League for a Free Poland "a Russian, Polish and Jewish movement." After the war he took a great interest in the Kibbutz enterprise. Contacted by Fisher, he was the economist of the K.K.L., supplying brochures and articles for *La*



May 26, 1932. Since February 2, in Geneva, the World Disarmament Conference had convened and the Left, who had made pacifism its key message under the guidance of Briand and Herriot, proposed still another solution: to prevent the Reich from re-arming, what was needed as quickly as possible was total disarmament. When the K.K.L. organized a massive commemoration “to the memory of the three great French friends of Zionism” soon after the death of Briand, in one of the auditoriums of the Maison de la Mutualité, Aimé Pallière presided and gave the opening speech. He was followed by Jean Longuet, Sam Meyer, Gaston Levy and finally René Cassin.<sup>35</sup> The latter, contacted by Fisher, had expressed enthusiasm and anxiety: “I must tell you that I came back from Palestine full of admiration for the Zionist effort and I believe it would be impossible and harmful to stop en route, but (...) I do not consider the Zionist settlement in Palestine as obligated to necessarily found a Jewish state or solve the world Jewish problem.” He however agreed to speak on Aristide Briand that night, “because I am not sufficiently competent to praise Mr. Gide.”

A little less than 108 people were in the audience as compared to twenty or so reporters, the result of efforts by the Paris bureau to alert the press... a totally unexpected fiasco since certain members of the committee and several Zionist leaders did not even attend... Meeting in urgent session, the members of the K.K.L. asked why. It was pointed out that the theme of the meeting was vague: three very different figures with no common denominator and the “funerear” atmosphere of the event. The general consensus was that there were too many events, always the same speakers and the need for speakers who spoke Yiddish. “Many more people would attend, knowing they would understand at least some of the speeches.” In Belleville, there were more than 50,000 Yiddish speaking Jewish workers. As for promised donations to the Briand Forest announced that evening, the 11,000 francs collected were not enough to do anything. Fisher wanted to ask André Spire to write an article, preferably in *Le Matin*, or the Countess of Noailles, or else resort to subterfuge and send a news wire from the K.K.L. in Jerusalem announcing the creation of this forest.

Public events, films, fund raising, collecting in all the synagogues, door prizes, balls, theatrical evenings, speaking tours all entered into the promotional effort but the key to the Paris K.K.L. Bureau’s propagandist activities was its magazine: *La Terre Retrouvée*. [*Refound Land*]

### **Reporter for *La Terre Retrouvée***

When the first issue came out on November 15, 1928, it was the result of lengthy preparation. From the inception of the K.K.L. Fisher had dreamed of endowing it with a press and promotional outlet. The fact that this dream was materialized at that time illustrates the progress of the idea of a nation within the French Jewish community. *La Terre Retrouvée* was the monthly “illustrated” magazine of the French Jewish National Fund; its self-defined purpose was to provide information on both Jewish renewal movement in the Diaspora and the repurchasing of land in Palestine to build settlements. The headquarters of the magazine were located at 11 Etienne Marcel Street (in the 3<sup>rd</sup> district of Paris), and in the offices of the K.K.L. The main contributors were Guerda Arlosoroff in Tel Aviv, and in Paris: Ferdinand Corcos, Joseph Fisher, Edmond Fleg, Charles Gide, Justin Godart, Baruch Hagam, Henri Hertz, Raymond-Raoul Lambert, Marcel Mirtel, Yvonne Netter, Max Nordau, Aimé Pallière, Pierre Paraf, and André Spire.

The monthly had on the average of twenty-four pages, illustrated from the beginning with pictures of projects in Palestine. It rapidly gained readership, rising from 15,000 copies in October 1929 – having benefited from the August disturbances of that year in Palestine and the emotional response it engendered – to take its place, in Jewish opinion, as a current events magazine. This success translated by a larger format, for the November 1929 issue, which initiated the magazine’s second year. Another turning point was in October 1936, when following financial difficulties, the layout was changed and *La Terre Retrouvée* was published twice a month, with 22 issues a year on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of the

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*Terre Retrouvée*.

<sup>34</sup> Albert Thomas (1878-1932) was the assistant secretary of state for Public Works before becoming Minister of Armaments (May 1915-1917). After the war he became a pacifist and an anti-militarist.

<sup>35</sup> *La Terre Retrouvée*, *ibidem*, p. 14. Jean Longuet, a member of Parliament, represented the Amis du Sionisme et de la Palestine ouvrière; Sam Meyer was the president of the Ligue pour la Réforme foncière; Gaston Levy was a member of the Conseil supérieur de l'Union des Coopératives de France; René Cassin was a professor at the Law School of Paris.

month, with a single issue in July and August. New topics were included such as Jewish life in France and Paris, in Germany, Eastern Europe and North Africa. The cost was one franc per issue but it was primarily sold by subscription. The magazine rose in price to 10 francs in 1928 for the monthly and to 30 francs in 1936 for the bi-monthly. It was published regularly from 1928 to 1940, and only the last issue dated June 1940, although in press, was never printed.

Palli re was active in all phases of publication, going with Fisher to Busson Printing Press, 117 Poissonni re Street to select the fonts and the layout. Henri Hertz chose the title and suggested putting a map of Palestine on the cover.<sup>36</sup> There had been the suggestion of calling the magazine “*Terre Promise*” [Promised Land] but the name already existed so *La Terre Retrouv e* was chosen in the end. This was a time of radical changes in the press and the editors, some of whom worked regularly for the major newspapers of the time (like Andre Spire on the *Matin*), were aware of these innovations. There was a preference for pictures of current events rather than archive photos and pictures were ordered from headquarters in Jerusalem. The inside pages needed to be sequenced and specialized to attract complementary advertising. The *Petit Parisien* as of 1925 had made a hit with its magazine pages “dealing every day or week with a specific category of readers or trying to satisfy curiosity on a particular theme (sports, literature, films).”<sup>37</sup> Palli re gave his opinion on existing feature sections or new ones. Fisher asked him whether they should include a page for children, to which Palli re replied positively. He tried to find volunteer reporters and wanted to introduce Fisher to “a young Palestinian man who is very intelligent and wants to spend one month’s vacation in Eretz Israel and has some ideas which I would like him to present to you.” Tireless, he took his duties to heart and in March 1930 he could be found distributing copies of the magazine during a U.U.J.J. conference. Despite expectations, Palli re wrote very little in the magazine (only 14 articles between 1928 and 1936) and had primarily an administrative role, and handled the layout with Fisher before each Issue was printed, re-reading the proofs, discussing with the printer, helping distribute copies.

### What were the results of this intense promotional activity?

What were the outcomes of this modern form of publicity – modem in the sense that it was based on films, lecture tours and a magazine – and one that was costly since it required permanent offices and staff? Despite the tone of this article, which has tried to capture the frantic pace of activity of the Paris bureau, historians have shown that the impact of the Jewish National Fund was slight on the French Jewish public, which was highly assimilated and content to remain so. However, when the members of the K.K.L. met in their office, assessed their progress, proposed strategies, wrote leaflets, organized meetings, they believed firmly in the success of their endeavor. Thus, when viewed from within, as has been done here, on the basis of Fisher’s correspondence, the Paris Bureau’s activities appear frenetic and humanly exhausting. They plotted curves, drew graphs to show where the collection boxes were placed, counted new members, drew up lists city by city. The archives give the impression of intense activity, although we know today the meager results of their collection box campaigns. The individuals who set them up expended a great deal of energy each time, and believed in what they were doing – the sine qua non condition for their perseverance. This is true for the period between 1926 and 1933, since after that, the figures speak for themselves<sup>38</sup> and the members of the Paris bureau could not ignore them.

For a whole series of reasons (disappointment at his failure to make the U.U.J.J. Zionist, fatigue, religious crisis) Palli re chose the worst moment possible to stop working for the K.K.L. Although he kept his title of vice-president until 1940, he had vanished on tiptoe as of 1934. This was a very bleak

<sup>36</sup> C.Z.A., CM, 467/38, doc. 431 from Fisher to Palli re, October 22, 1928 and C.Z.A., CM 467/38, doc. 434, from Palli re to Fisher, same date: “*La Terre Retrouv e* seems to me to be a good title, the idea of the map is also excellent.”

<sup>37</sup> *Histoire g n rale de la presse fran aise*, eds. Claude Bellanger, Jacques Godelhot, Pierre Guiral, Fernand Terrou, vol III., *De 1871   1940*, Paris, P.U.F., 1972, p. 477.

<sup>38</sup> C.Z.A. C.M. 467/1 doc. 33 K.K.L. France activity for the year 5686 (1926) to 5697 (1937) (in francs).

An	Total	Paris	M�tropole	Alsace	Afrique du Nord
5686	320 391	90 697	26 368	139 866	63 460 (1926)
5690	900 218	198 641	129 462	171 125	400 890 (1930)
5663	662 663	287 330	75 093	159 548	160 092 (1933)
5697	460 297	200 515	50 162	81 939	127 681(1937)

period and the annual reports of the Jewish National Fund in France sent to headquarters in Jerusalem were explicit. The Paris Bureau had to cope with a number of difficulties: bankruptcy of the Ivris bank where the Jewish National Fund had its account, a drop in French revenues with the unexpected defection of North Africa and hence a reduction in staff salaries. In addition, *La Terre Retrouvée* was also in the red<sup>39</sup>, the World Jewish Congress had been founded, and the agreement to transfer capital and goods between the Jewish Agency for Palestine and Nazi Germany dealt a blow to the boycott campaign supported by the K.K.L. These topics have not been discussed here, because Pallière was no longer mentioned in the deliberations and the minutes of the central committee of the Paris Bureau and his correspondence with Fisher became much too sporadic to be informative.

Catherine Poujol  
Inalco

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<sup>39</sup> C.Z.A., C.M. 467/1. Minutes of the meeting of April 7, 1937. Pallière was requested to attend. The magazine was 132,000 francs in the red. Fisher wanted to stop publishing but the committee was opposed.