

C O N F I D E N T I A L

February 1961.

REPORT ON THE FALASHAS OF ETHIOPIA

I beg to submit this report on my visit to Ethiopia January-February 1961 to survey the present conditions of the Falashas. I have not discussed their origin or their history, their religious practices and liturgy. These matters have been described by many scholars. It suffices for my purpose that the Falashas have been loyal to their primitive form of Judaism against constant oppression for possibly two thousand years.

Their numbers are estimated at 25,000 - 30,000; but some say they are many more. They live mostly in villages of the Berghemir and Semien province in the north of Ethiopia, of which Gondar, the former capital of Ethiopia, is the chief town. They are small cultivators, tenants of land which is owned by the ruling class of Christian Amharas. They are also primitive artisans engaged in masonry, pottery, weaving and tinsmithing. The Amharas do not practice these crafts and look down on them.

A few educated Falashas live in the town of Gondar, Addis Abbeba and Asmara, and are in Government service or skilled workers. One Falasha, Tadessa Yacob, is Minister of Agriculture. Another former leader Emanuel Tamrat, who was Chairman of the Council of Education, lives in exile in Jerusalem.

It is nearly a century that Jewish communities in the West have been concerned with this Judaized section of the Ethiopian people, who call themselves Bet Israel - their common name.

Falashas means invaders or immigrants; and may come from the same Semitic root as Philistines. It was Halevy of France who in 1868 wrote about their customs and literature, and brought one Falasha to be trained in France. Other Jewish scholars of the nineteenth century followed his example. For over fifty years from the beginning of this century, Dr. J. Faitlovich made a sustained effort to educate some of their youth, and to bring them into relation with the larger Jewish communities. Pro-Falasha societies were founded by him in Western countries. Young Falashas were placed in Jewish schools of different countries to be trained as teachers of their own community when they returned. English, German and American Protestant Missionaries have been actively proselytizing among them for more than a century, and have made and are making many converts.

In 1934 Faitlovich secured approval of plans for a teachers' seminary at Addis Abbeba, and the Emperor gave a site, which is still owned by the community, for the building. Before the plans could be executed, the Fascist invasion of the country and then the World War, caused suspension. But Faitlovich returned after the restoration of the Emperor in 1941, and continued his educational work. He died in 1954.

Some years after the establishment of the State of Israel, a fresh effort was made for the education of the Falashas. This time it was the Jewish Agency for Israel which took the initiative. It established a teachers' training school, directed by an Israeli teacher, in Asmara, now the chief town in Eritrea, which is federated with Ethiopia; and it sent teachers, mostly young Falashas, to over thirty villages, to give elementary education in Amharic and in Hebrew. Within two years, all but two of the village schools, and the training school, were closed. It is not clear whether this was due to lack of funds of the Agency, or to some action of the Ethiopian Government. There seems to have been loose talk about the mass migration of the Falashas to Israel, for which the schools were a preparation; and that aroused the hostility of the Ethiopian Authorities.

Be this as it may, the action of the Agency was reduced to the maintenance of two small village schools in the Gondar area, for some 200-250 children, and the bringing to Israel of a small number of boys and girls who were placed in children's villages, particularly the Mizrahi Kfar Batya, to be trained in agriculture and handicrafts for two to three years. They were expected to return to Ethiopia and be teachers in their villages, and the Ethiopian Government obtained a personal guarantee for their return.

The first group of twelve was brought in 1955, the second of seventeen in 1958. Most of the first group in fact came back, and some are teachers of the two schools. Others have found work in the towns. A Falasha pupil of Faitlovich, Yona Bogala, who had received a European Jewish education, is Director of the schools and receives a salary from the Jewish Agency.

In 1959 a fresh effort was made to enlarge the education. The society for technical training ORT proposed to open a trade school for Falashas in the Gondar area, with a view to improving their rough primitive artisan work. Robin Gilbert and H. Guggenheim of Switzerland went out to Ethiopia and had interviews with the Emperor and the Vice Minister of Education who favoured the project. I have attached as an appendix, a letter which was written by the Vice Minister. It was indicated however, that a school of the kind could not be exclusively for Falashas, but must be open to pupils of other communities. The Ethiopian Government would not permit discrimination by a foreign educational body in favour of one minority. That condition discouraged ORT and the Joint, which would provide half of the funds, and nothing happened.

The failure to open a school caused bitter disappointment to the Falashas, who felt themselves abandoned by the Jewish bodies and in some cases turned to the Christian missionaries. It also annoyed the Emperor who received no word of the abandonment of the project.

In 1960 a disturbing report about the conditions of the Falashas was given by an Israeli, ex-member of the Knesset, who travelled in Ethiopia, visiting their villages, and kept up a correspondence with Yona Bogala. He said they were oppressed by their Christian landlords and subjected to harsh taxation and charges, that murderous attacks on them were frequent, and that teachers of the Jewish Agency school did not dare to continue their work. Unless something was done soon by Jewish bodies concerned with their welfare, the community might disintegrate.

The Falashas submitted a detailed petition to the Emperor, setting out their grievances, but had no satisfaction. I was told by Tadessa that in fact, a commission was appointed to examine the complaints.

It was in these circumstances that I was asked in the Autumn of 1960 if I would visit Ethiopia and use whatever influence I had with the Emperor, and with some of the Ministers whom I knew, to obtain some alleviation and recommend measures which could be taken to help. I had been in the country in 1943 on a mission for the Emperor, and had been counselor of the Ethiopian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference of 1946, and in touch with Ethiopian affairs ever since.

I agreed to go in December, but just then came the grave outbreak of the Imperial Guard against the Emperor. The journey must be postponed. A month later, I was assured by an English friend who holds a high position in the Ministry of Justice, that the latter part of January would be a good moment to see the Emperor and Ministers. I went to Israel first to consult with the persons who were concerned, and to visit the Falashas who are in the children's villages.

I arrived with my wife in Addis Abbeba on 23.1.61, and got in touch at once with Yona Bogala. Since last June he had been scared of going to the Gondar region, because he was warned by a Falasha policeman that search was being made for him. He gave me the history of the schools, which were directed first by Mizrachi teachers from Israel. The original Director of the training college at Asmara, Mr. Beeri, was in trouble about financial affairs, and was soon removed. The second, Mr. Sivan, was greatly liked but only stayed a year. The teachers were Falashas who had been in Israel for Training.

On the advice of the Director of UN Technical Aid, I called on several officers, Ethiopian and international, who are interested in communal education through community centres which give educational, social and medical help. Their funds however, were fully committed, and they could not hold out hope of aiding the effort for the Falashas.

A successful venture of the kind is directed by the English Brigadier Sandford and his English wife, who have played a big part in the social work of Ethiopia since the First World War. I visited their settlement, 40 kilometres north of Addis. It is supported by an American voluntary body, World Neighbourhood, and is run most economically. The school buildings are the simplest and built by the inhabitants of the region; and medical help is given by an Ethiopian health officer trained at the college in Gondar, but not fully qualified, and by two nurses from New Zealand. It would be possible for one or two Falashas who had some training, to be apprenticed to this centre and get experience of social and nursing work.

I had a talk with the Director General of the Ministry of Education, who in 1959 conducted the negotiations with the ORT representatives about the establishment of the trade school. He gave me a copy of the official letter of the Vice Minister (later Ambassador in London) approving the scheme in principle. He too was surprised that the scheme had lapsed.

I obtained an audience with the Emperor a few days after my arrival, and before it I called on two Ministers whom I knew. Aklilou Hapte - Wold, who was Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1943, is now Minister of that Office as well as Minister of the Pen and Deputy Prime Minister, - there being no P.M. The combination makes him an important member of the Cabinet. He assured me the Emperor knew about the problem of the Falashas and was anxious to help in improving their conditions. Tadessa Yacob, the Falasha Minister, had a providential escape when the other Ministers in Addis were taken by the rebels and murdered. He advised that the two things I should ask of the Emperor were approval and support of a trade school and of a primary school in the Falasha area, with a dispensary attached. The dispensary in his view was most important because the Falashas were dependent at present for medical help on hospitals of the Christian missions. By his talk I was strengthened in the presumption that the main effort of the Jewish bodies should be directed towards improving the education of the Falashas in Ethiopia. Tadessa said that it would be easy to arrange administratively that the large majority of the pupils in the trade school should be Falashas, particularly as the Amhara Christians despised artisan work; but the school would have to be open to Christians.

About the reported offer of a tract of land to the Falashas in another region than Gondar, he said there had been nothing specific. The position of Falasha cultivators was like that of the mass of agricultural tenants, e.g. the Gallas in the province of Shoa, and could only be improved by large general measures of land reform. The Emperor knew that that was one of the most necessary measures, but it could not be tackled for the Falashas alone. Tadessa doubted whether the Emperor was in the mood to consider it at the moment; discontent of tenants was one of the main grievances at the back of the recent revolt. The request of the Falashas in a memorandum addressed to the World Jewish Congress that they should all be settled in an empty area of State domain where they could enjoy communal economy, was not practical, it would provoke the resentment of the Amharas, which the Emperor, even if he had the will to provide land for Falashas before all others, could not afford to disregard.

I had an audience with the Emperor on 27th January. Taffary Work, Minister of the Palace and the interpreter for foreigners, being present and translating. H.M. was very friendly and recalled my visit in 1943. I told him of the concern of Jewish representative bodies for the Falashas, and the educational measures which were suggested. He approved the proposals for the two schools and said they would have his support. He hoped that this time something would be done, and that the person representing the Jewish bodies would come soon to arrange the details with the Ministries. He wanted to know the names and purposes of the Jewish bodies, and I told him of the Joint, ORT, OSE, and World Jewish Congress. He remarked that there should be a committee in Addis to be a link between the Jewish bodies and the Ethiopian Government, and supervise the schools. I said there would be no difficulty about that. H.M. thought that the best place for a trade school would be Behardar, now a small town at the south end of Lake Tana (the source of the

Blue Nile) which is to be developed as an industrial centre. The project of a hydro-electric station at the falls of the Nile near the town is being executed, and the Soviet Union are building a technical college, while Solel Boneh are building part of a major metal road which will connect Behardar with Gondar in the north and Addis in the south. The Emperor is keen on the development, but I remarked that Gondar seemed better suited, because it is recognised by the Falashas as their centre, and many of their villages are within walking distance.

I raised the unsatisfactory position of the Falasha tenants. I said that I knew it was part of a land-tenure problem of the whole country, but I hoped H.M. might approve some measures to alleviate it by making available vacant State domain. He replied that agrarian reform was one of the major measures he intended to carry out with the purpose that every Ethiopian cultivator including the Falashas should own the piece of land he cultivated. In the meantime landless Falashas could apply to the Land Commission which deals with State domain. In conclusion, he said that I should see him again after I had visited the Falasha villages and Gondar and Behardar. After the interview I spoke with Taffary Work about sending Falasha boys and girls to Israel for training. He said he knew it was being done, and there was no objection.

I went to Gondar and spend four days there and in the Falasha country, having Yona as my guide and interpreter. The first village we saw was a few miles from Gondar and is noted for its handicrafts. The conditions in which the Falashas are living are indescribably wretched. They have very little land for cultivation, and are crowded in rough straw or mud huts, which are workshop, sleeping and eating-room for the family combined. The children are dressed in dirty sacks and most suffer from eye disease. Only two, one a boy and a girl, went to the Government school in Gondar. The others had no education. We took with us the British ambassador who had not seen Falashas before, and he remarked that conditions were worse than in other Ethiopian villages. He has instructed the British Consul in Asmara, Mr. Mitchell, whose area includes the Falasha country, to keep him informed of any development.

The next day I went with the local Director of Education to the site for the trade school which was proposed years ago by the ORT delegation. It is State domain and seemed admirably suited for a combined agricultural and trade school. The Director welcomed the foundation of such a school in his area. I had a talk also with a Dr. Jaeger, a German, Director of the Health College, supported by American Point IV aid, which trains men and women to give medical assistance, dresses and nurses. He supported the project of a trade school and of another primary school with a dispensary. He could not, however, supply a Health Officer from the College and believed it would be the best course to bring a doctor and nurse from Israel for a term of years during which they would train the local staff. That course may be too costly, apart from the difficulty of finding a qualified doctor who would live in a Falasha village. A Falasha nurse trained in Israel might be

adequate. It was suggested later by David Owen the Director of the UN Technical Aid, whom I met in Addis, that an Israeli or other Jewish doctor might come for a few months as an adventure to instruct the nurse.

The next day I went with Yona to a Falasha village about fifteen miles from Gondar near the highway. The elders of half a dozen or more villages, and a large part of the boys and girls attending the two schools of the Agency, which are in the region, were gathered. All the teachers were Falashas who had been in Israel. The contrast between the dirty and ragged children of the village, and these boys and girls of the schools who were neatly dressed, clean and bright after their long walk of one to two hours, and who sang Hebrew songs, was remarkable and encouraging. The Kahanim, elders of the village, made it clear that they wanted more schools, but they were unanimously against placing the trade school at Behardan, which was far away, so that they would be cut off from their children. I thought the village of Tada, where we were, would be a good spot for the primary school and dispensary.

About the question of land and possible transfer of some Falashas to new areas where they might be owners of land, they were of divided opinion. Some would follow the advice of Jewish bodies outside; others were apprehensive, suspecting that there was a plot of their landlords. They made no complaint of personal attacks, and I was told no murder has taken place in the last two years. Of the desire of a number of the youth to get to Israel I was left in no doubt, though I did not mention aliya. When I spoke of the work of Solal Boneh and the road they were building near where we were assembled, one remarked that they would be happy if the Israeli body were building a road to Eilat. And that was applauded. When I left Gondar, some of the Falasha youth came to the airfield to give me letters for friends in Israel, including the President of the State.

I knew that the Israel F.O. and the heads of the Falashas, Tadessa and Yona, were opposed to any proposal to the Emperor for a large emigration to Israel, even if they believed that that radical course would be the best for the well-being of the community. They feared that it would antagonise the Emperor. On the other hand, I felt that I should use my second audience in part to ascertain his reaction to a less radical request, that a few young Falashas should be permitted to leave Ethiopia and settle in Israel. That would be an extension of the practice of bringing to Israel for training small groups of boys and girls who returned at the end of their courses.

I spent a day in Behardar, and the Governor, who was formerly Director-General of Education, said there was no difficulty in getting land there for a trade school if it were desired to place it in that area. On my return to Addis it was not easy to secure at once a second audience with H.M., because a conference of the Economic Commission for Africa was being held, and the place was full of delegations. Taffary Work arranged for me to see H.M. during a display of the Air Force which was held in honour of the Conference. Having gone to the airfield I felt that the place and the

atmosphere were not suited for a serious talk, and I asked for an audience at the Palace on a later date. In the interval I had a meeting with the wife of the head of the Bible Society who lives in Gondar but had been away. She stated that the Falashas suffer from the double disability as tenants and as Jews. But those who are educated mix freely with the Christians. She said too that the Church Missions for the Jews, which has a hospital and school in the Gondar region, is renewing its activity in the villages. I met six young Falashas in Addis who had work in the town. Three were in the employ of Solol Boneh, one, having been a teacher, was a salesman, one was a mechanic in a garage, and one a builder in an Italian enterprise. This seemed to indicate that Israeli employers in Ethiopia might be able to find more places for Falashas who are trained. I was told that a number of Falashas are in the Army and Police Force.

The President of Israel spoke to me before my journey of the possibility of apprenticing one or two Falasha boys to printers in Israel with a view to establishing an Amharic press later for textbooks, etc. That idea was welcomed by several Ethiopians to which I spoke, and notably by Amhar Kassa, grandson of the famous Ras, who during my stay was nominated Governor of the Northern Province. He promised to help the school if it is established in Gondar and is very well disposed to the extension of Israel-Ethiopian cultural relations. He was altogether in favour of having the combined agricultural and trade school in Gondar.

For my second audience with H.M. I prepared a statement which I set out here together with my note of H.M.'s remarks.

- "1. "Since I had the honour of speaking to Y.I.M., I have visited Gondar and Behardar. I saw villages of the Falashas and spoke with a number of the elders and with the youth who are attending two schools maintained by the Jewish Agency. I was distressed by the conditions in the Falasha villages, but I found that they were eager for more education. I examined possible sites for two schools near Gondar; and agricultural and trade school which would be for Falasha and others, and a primary school which would be mainly for Falashas. I have a specific proposal to lay respectfully before Y.I.M., to open a combined agricultural and trade school between the town and the airport of Gondar, on a site named Abba Samuel, which was formerly an agricultural station. I was told that the property belongs to the State, and a small part is used at present. The buildings on it would make schoolrooms and workshops, and there is ample area for horticulture and agricultural training and for growing vegetables, which would provide food for the pupils. Water and wood for building huts are abundant. A school on that site would attract boys and girls and prepare them for useful life, and be a benefit to the district as well as to the Ethiopian Falasha community.

- "2. Y.I.M. suggested that the trade school might be in Behardar. I spent a day there, and realised that there will be a great future for the new town. Some of the Falashas, when trained, would, I hope, find work there as artisans. On the other hand, it is remote from Falasha villages, and the elders whom I met were unanimous in asking that the school should be near Gondar. They could then be in touch with their children. The Jewish Bodies concerned about the Falashas would be grateful if Y.M. would generously direct the grant of a lease of the land at Gondar free of rent. That would assure the goodwill of the Jews of the world towards Y.M. and Ethiopia.
- "3. The opening of another primary school for Falashas is urgent. Only a tiny proportion of the children receive any education. Apart from about 200 in 2 schools maintained by the Jewish Agency, only a few individuals attend Government schools in Gondar and other places. A school situated near Tada, close to the Imperial highway, would serve several villages where Falashas live; and a dispensary with a nurse provided by the Jewish Bodies might be attached to it. The school would serve also older villages and help them to improve conditions, in the way that the Community School in Gondar serves the region. Again if Y.M. would graciously direct the grant of a plot of land for the school, it would be a great boon. The Jewish Bodies would maintain both schools for at least 5 years.
- "4. It will be possible to appoint a committee in Europe of representatives of the bodies providing the funds for the schools, and in touch with the committee in Addis Ababa which would manage the schools. Men like H.E. Tadessa Yacob, Nathan Marein, Dr. Spira, and Bension Shalemay (Marein is an Israeli, an advocate, who has held a high position in the Ministry of Justice since 1942. Dr. Spira is an Israeli, the Director of the Technical College at Addis. Mr. Shelemay is a prominent merchant and the agent of the Jewish Agency for their two schools.), have all agreed to be members of such a committee. Y.M. may wish to nominate a member of the Ministry of Education to the committee. I hope it is not asking too much that Y.M. would let me have a letter before I leave Ethiopia approving the proposals in principle, and directing that land for the schools shall be made available.
- "5. I regret that I cannot at this moment give a binding undertaking that the Jewish bodies which asked me to come and survey the position, will provide the funds. But I am confident that, when I present my report and can assure them of your approval, that undertaking will be given, and a responsible person will be appointed to come and work out the details with Y.M.'s Ministers,

- "6. May I remind Y.M. of the request which I mentioned at my first audience, that Y.M. will arrange the transfer of some of the poor and landless Falasha tenants to empty lands of the Government in the neighbouring regions where they can be landlords.
- "7. May I finally say a personal word from my heart. I am told and believe that some young Falashas yearn to go to the Land of Israel. They feel that these are the days of fulfilment of prophecy; and want to be united with the rest of the congregation of Israel. In the last years the scattered tribes from Yemen, Iran, India and North Africa have been gathered in Israel, and thousands have come from Britain and U.S.A. It would not be right to foster a general movement of Falashas to Israel. But I would ask Y.I.M. to consider whether a small group of young persons may be permitted to go and form a settlement on the land. That act would strengthen the ties of friendship which bind Ethiopia and Israel and be another link of the two peoples".

H.M. said he remembered my past help to Ethiopia and was always glad to see me.

Paras. 1 and 2: He said that he knew the site, and he asked what part and what area of the land was wanted for the school, and how much money the Jewish bodies would give. I said that I thought the higher part of the land, where there were some buildings, and an area of 12 to 20 acres would be wanted. I could not say how much the bodies would contribute. The person who came out would discuss the details and find what sum was required for capital expenditure and maintenance. H.M. said that he would support the establishment of the school and provide State land either in Gondar or Behardar. If the Falashas wanted the school at Gondar, he would accept that.

Para. 3: H.M. believed that there was a dispute between the Falashas and the Christians at Tada about the land. Tadessa Yacob could give me the details. The person who came out would have to go into that, and the primary school and dispensary might be in another place.

Para. 4: H.M. welcomed the proposal to establish the two committees, and thought the persons suggested for the local committee were suited. It was difficult for him to give a written approval till the plans were more certain, but he would let me have a letter assuring his support for the plans. (The letter is to be sent to Sir Charles Mathew for me, and I expect it any day.)

Para. 6: H.M. would help, but it would be necessary to find out what empty areas of State domain were available.

Last Para.: He knew that some Falashas had already gone to Israel and settled. He would have no objection to permitting a group to go.

Before the audience I consulted Taffary Work about the principal points, and the one suggestion which he advised me to modify was that the Jewish bodies would maintain the two schools for five years, and then the Ethiopian Government would take them over. He felt certain that H.M. would not accept that condition, and so I changed the proposal to an undertaking to maintain the schools for at least five years. Taffary Work did not raise any objection to my personal appeal to H.M. to permit a small group of Falashas to settle in Israel. I had in mind a small village in the Lachish area, such as is established for the primitive Jews of the Atlas Mountains. It would not only be a symbol of recognition of the Falashas as Children of Israel, but would give heart to the community.

After the audience I had two interesting conversations. One was with Dr. Kotschnig, the USA representative at the Economic Conference and her permanent delegate to the Economic and Social Council of UN. I asked him about the possibility of help for the trade school from US Point IV aid. He advised that, if and when the proposal become operative, the committee in Addis might turn to USOM in Ethiopia for technical aid and for equipment. That would be better than asking for money. The other talk was with Tadesa Yacob, who is extremely conservative and cautious. He said that there might be a question of the State's title to the land at Abba Samuel. But the area had been treated as Government land for many years, and within the boundaries of the town of Gondar it was possible to expropriate land for a school if necessary. That was therefore a site which could be made available. As to a school at Tada, he explained the difficulties of tenure. It was uncertain whether there was State domain in or near the village and land of the Amhara owners could not be expropriated in rural areas. It was a matter for investigation, and if State land was not available there, the school might be placed in another Falasha area where State land was available. He would be glad to help in the investigation. He was not hopeful about the possibility of finding Government land in neighbouring regions in which Falashas could be settled. In the provinces of the old Kingdom almost all the land belonged to Amhara owners and they would oppose any grant.

I was in constant communication with the Israel Consul-General at Addis, Mr. Bar-On, but I did not suggest to the Emperor that the Government of Israel should have any direct part in the schools for the Falashas. I believe that the Israel Government does not wish to complicate its very close and friendly relations with the Emperor by intervening in a local problem, and it does not regard the Falashas as a persecuted branch of the Jewish people calling for their action.

Before I went to Ethiopia I visited most of the Falasha boys and girls presently being trained in Israel. Full use should be made of them, so that they may be instrumental in improving conditions in the villages when they return. There are seventeen, eleven boys and six girls. Originally all were placed in the village of Kfar Batya, where the first group trained; but they have been distributed for more specialised training and only six remain there. Of the girls three are being trained as nurses, two in child

care, and one in domestic science. Of the boys, five, the most intelligent, have been transferred to Ayanot, where they follow agricultural highschool courses. Whether they will be able to matriculate remains to be seen. But they should certainly be able, when they return, to instrat the cultivators in their original villages. So too those who are beingtrained in building, carpentry, weaving, etc. should impart their knowledge in their native land. Some may be teachers in the proposed new schools. I met in Israel also before my journey the son of Tadessa, who is studying Economics and Political Sciences at Bar-Ilan University. He told me that he intends to return to Ethiopia and devote himself to his fellow-Falashas. He was socked by the refusal of some rabbis to recognise the Falashas as Jews.

I would add a word about the cost of the two schools. I have no knowledge of what will be required, but the person who will, I hope, be sent by the Jewish bodies providing the funds must have some definite sum to propose. The figure of \$200,000 which I first gave in a provisional report for capital and expenditure may be exaggerated. Judging by the experience of the community centre of the Sandfords, the school buildings and student quarters could be simple hutments which the Falashas themselves could set up, the main costs would be for equipment and means of transport.

But whatever the estimated cost, I hope that the Jewish bodies will show their interest and concern not by newspaper articles and similar pronouncements but by a generous financial contribution, in the way the Americans, the British, the Swedes, the Germans, and the Russians are doing. So far they have not made an effort to help the Falashas comparable with the effort of the Christian missionaries to convert them. Jews have a more direct tie with the Falashas than the other donor-nations have with the Ethiopians, and they should do something which can be practically achieved. The objection, sometimes made, that the Falashas are not true Jews, but Africans whose ancestors were converted to a dubious kind of Judaism seems to me heartless. The community has preserved for two thousand years its faith and its observances in spite of incessant pressure to abandon them, and has a title on this account to be regarded as Jewish. If the objection is to their ethnical origin, that might be made also to the Jews of Cochin, and part of the Jews of Eastern Europe, because of the Chazar element among them. One thing seems certain, that, if we do not help soon and substantially, the disintegration by Christian missionary effort will grow and the ancient branch will be lost.

I hope that Robin Gilbert, who went on the mission for ORT in 1959 may be available to go again and conduct detailed negotiations. I think he would be acceptable to all the bodies involved, including the Ethiopian ministries and the local Jewish committee; I should be happy to give him any help in my power.

(-) Norman Bentwich

APPENDIX

Ministry of Education & Fine Arts
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

13th February, 1959.

Messrs. Hermann N. Guggenheim & Robin M. Gilbert
Representatives of the ORT Union
Geneva, Switzerland.
(c/o Ghion Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia),

Gentlemen,

Further to our recent meetings and discussions and to your memoranda regarding the possible establishment of a Vocational Training School in Begemdir Province, I am writing now to confirm that the Ministry of Education & Fine Arts is very much interested in the suggestion you have put forward.

You will appreciate that any final decision in regard to such a project must be made by the Board of Education, but when you are able to let me have a definite proposal I shall be happy to submit it to the Board for their consideration.

Meanwhile, it is my understanding that your thought is to establish a Vocational Training School which will serve a broad cross-section of the population in a district of Begemdir Province and which will be operated in full accordance with the Government's regulations regarding mission and private institutions. The exact location of the school and details of the programmes it will offer will have to be considered later when the proposal is more advanced, but the language of instruction will be Amharic and English and although no financial contribution is called for, the Ministry of Education may be asked to help by providing land and premises and to facilitate the services of certain Ethiopian teachers, possibly recruited from the Technical School. The Imperial Ethiopian Government will also consider granting concessions in regard to the importation of teaching materials and equipment in accordance with the rules applicable to private schools.

We do very much appreciate your interest in our educational programme, and I shall be most happy to present to the appropriate authorities here any proposals that may be made by your Executive Council on the basis of your report to them.

Yours very truly,

(signed) Endalkatchew Makonnen

Vice-Minister