

The 60th anniversary of the Emile Zola Lodge and of the presence of B'nai B'rith in Provence

Marseille, France

Report by Gilberte Jacaret

We first were gathered together at the Marseille B'nai B'rith Lodge in their premises located in the most picturesque Place aux Huiles, in the old harbor. The Vice-President of B'nai B'rith France and Regional Coordinator Francine Coen, the Presidents and the members of the Emile Zola Association, the President of the Association of Provence-Midi Pyrénées-Var gave Brother Armand Azoulai and me a warm welcome.

At first we were shown B'nai B'rith life in the region through photos, videos and movies, followed by two most interesting lectures.

Brother Serge Coen dealt with the principles and the orientation of B'nai B'rith. On the one hand, we have to work for the durability, the union and the identity of the Jewish people, take care that the rights of men be respected, practice charity, keep the memory of the Holocaust alive and participate in the destiny of Israel.

On the second hand, demography is getting lower and lower, the number of anti-Zionists is growing and some Jews separate from Judaism or, on the other hand concentrate totally into religion. In order to face these dangers, the right way is to kindle the desire to immigrate to Israel.

Brother Jean-Pierre Bensimon made a thorough analysis of the problems of immigration and of the economic crisis in France. The action of BB depends on the number of Jews. The ever-changing community should be guided by solidarity. The links with the CRIF are to be thoroughly defined.

We are easily drawn to detect some similar interests with Armenians and Moderate Muslims.

Sister Josette Nakache and Brother Jean Lévy analyzed the importance of B'nai B'rith in the city. B'nai B'rith is linked to UNESCO. It has an ethic of its own and it keeps the memory of the Holocaust alive. B'nai B'rith is an active part of the CRIF. It is linked to the whole world through B'nai B'rith Europe and B'nai B'rith International.

The gala dinner took place in the Château des Fleurs hall.

Dinner was both elegantly served and delicious. The Mentor of B'nai B'rith France, Brother Jacques Jacubert underlined the growing importance of BB. Daniel Mariaschin represents BB at the United Nations and at the Council Human Rights. He was recently present in Geneva and at the World Forum of Human Rights on May 10.

Brother Armand Azoulai, Honorary Life Senior Vice-President, Member of the international Board of Governors, Chair of the BBE Finance Committee, announced the twinning between his Lodge in Geneva and the Emile Zola Lodge in Marseille.

The key-note guest speaker was Dan Jaffe, Professor at the Bar Ilan University, in Israel.

Dan Jaffe was born in 1977. He has a PhD in History of Religions. He presently teaches about relations between rabbinic Judaism and primitive Christianity at Bar Ilan.

The subject of the evening was "Judaism and Jewish identity";

Ben Gourion asked the question: "what is a Jew?"; The Jewish law is too demanding. One should add some amendments. Conversion should be easier. According to the Talmud, the converted are more important to God. Moreover, during the pogroms, many women gave birth to children after having been raped. We have to accept them as Jews and accordingly, we should change the law and endow women with more importance.

In the XIXth century, Jews stepped into modern times with the creation of the consistory, Mendelssohn's philosophy and the differences drawn between Ashkenazim and the Sephardim.

For Israel, man is not created. Men are creating the modern man.