Israel: Recovering from illness, two little girls learn sewing at Malben home in Jerusalem
1914-1954
The
Joint Distribution Committee
Album
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Irving R. Dickman
Director of Public Relations
Foreword

Even for those of us who have been associated with the Joint Distribution Committee for many years, the pictures and documents in this book offer new insight into the JDC story. As you glance through them, it quickly becomes apparent that the story of the agency since its founding in 1914 can be told and understood only against the sweeping background of modern Jewish history.

Because JDC’s mission is one of relief and of rescue and rehabilitation, this collection becomes, above all, a record of the successive crises which have menaced overseas Jewry during the past forty years. Of course, the pictures can recall no more than the highlights of JDC’s varied activities — during the first World War, during the era of reconstruction which followed, during the rise of Nazism and World War II, and during the troubled years which have followed V-E Day. If you are moved by these reminders of all that has passed from the scene, I think you will also be impressed by the similarity between Jewish youngsters in the Poland of the 20’s and in the North Africa of 1954.

What will be most gratifying, perhaps, both to those who directed and to those who supported JDC’s programs, are the revealing glimpses which these pages give of JDC’s frequent role not only as a participant but as a maker of history.

Edward M. M. Warburg, Chairman
Joint Distribution Committee

December 1954
Caught between warring armies, Jews in Palestine and Eastern Europe beseeched American Jewry for aid. On November 27, 1914 existing relief committees joined to establish the Joint Distribution Committee for the Relief of Jewish War Sufferers. Among those taking an active part were: (seated, left to right) Felix M. Warburg, Chairman; Aaron Teitelbaum, Albert Lucas, Secretary; Mrs. F. Friedman, official
stenographer; Boris D. Bogen, Executive Director; Leon Sanders, Harry Fischel, Sholem Asch, Alexander Kahn, Jacob Milch, Miss Harriet E. Lowenstein, Comptroller; Colonel Moses Schoenberg, M. Z. Margolies, Israel Friedlander, Paul Baerwald, Associate-Treasurer; Julius Levy, Peter Wiernik, Meyer Gillis, Harry Cutler, Cyrus Adler, Arthur Lehman, Treasurer; Jacob H. Schiff; (standing, left to right) Abraham Zucker, Isidore Hershfield, Meyer Berlin, Stanley Bero, Louis Topkis, Morris Engelman.
Tired of Giving? You Don’t Know What Feeling Tired Means!

Representing the major organized groups in American Jewish life, JDC quickly achieved almost universal support of American Jewry, launched its first nationwide fund-raising campaigns. Ding’s cartoon in the New York Tribune was widely used.
President Woodrow Wilson called for “aid to the war-stricken people of a race which has given to the United States so many worthy citizens.” Following passage of a resolution by the U. S. Senate, President Wilson proclaimed January 27, 1916 as “Jewish Relief Day.”
The $10,000,000 Life Bond!

As the United States Government issued a Liberty Bond, that means the life, the security, the happiness, of our one hundred millions of people, so we, as Jews, have our bond, to which we must subscribe with equal readiness and this bond is our $10,000,000 Fund for 1917.

We might fittingly call our $10,000,000 Fund the Life Bond of Jewry, for its full and complete subscription, means the very life, the very existence of the Jewish race across the seas.

America's Liberty Bond, not without the help of American Jews, has been oversubscribed. The Life Bond must also be oversubscribed. We shall be lacking in the manifestation of the Jewish heart if this fails to come true. As the Liberty Bond has been subscribed in large and small amounts, according to the individual resources of the subscribers, so all may take a part of the Life Bond. But there should not be a Jew in America, neither a man or woman, not even a little child, but should give of what he has, some part, as large a part as he may be able, in the form of a subscription to the Life Bond.

We cannot evade our responsibility in this and still be good Jews any more than we can, as Americans, fail to subscribe to the Liberty Bond and still remain loyal to the United States. The ties which bind us to our kin in Europe are twofold. Many thousands of us owe to those of our faith abroad, the fact that we are here in America, for it is they who gave us the opportunity to come here and to enjoy the security, prosperity, happiness and freedom.

Early in 1917, JDC launched a concerted drive for a $10,000,000 fund for aid to Jewry overseas. After the entrance of the U.S. into the war, JDC was permitted to set up a branch in neutral Holland to distribute funds to Jews in the territories of the Central Powers.
As a humanitarian and non-political agency JDC attracted to its leadership the outstanding personalities of the American Jewish community.
Hundreds of thousands of needy Jews in Central and Eastern Europe received food, clothing and medical aid, as well as funds. As soon as shipping was available, items which could not be purchased in quantity overseas were sent directly from the U. S. Here is a shipment of kosher meat leaving New York aboard the SS Asburn.
JDC's activity in Russia, begun as early as 1914, included relief, feeding, child care, medical aid, reconstruction and vocational training assistance. Between 1914 and 1924, JDC spent approximately $14,300,000 for the relief and rehabilitation of Jews in Russia. Note the "Joint" sign (in Russian) on the wall (left).
The first JDC medical unit of 18 physicians and sanitation personnel arrived in Poland January 1921. This unit, working with Polish-Jewish medical aid organizations, helped to revive, transform and finance almost 500 medical and sanitation institutions, including public baths, dispensaries, hospitals, sanitariums, X-ray stations, nurses' training schools, milk centers and well-baby stations. Thousands owed their recovery from war injuries and disease to these installations.
Equally important for the establishment of a thriving Jewish community life in Eastern Europe was the aid which JDC provided for religious and cultural activities. From its earliest days JDC also established a program of special holiday grants. Here food packages are being prepared for Passover distribution in Warsaw.
The ravages of disease continued to harass East European Jewry for many years after the war. Working closely with TOZ, Polish-Jewish medical aid organization, JDC personnel fought typhus and other diseases. In Rovno, Volhynia, clothes are being placed into mobile disinfecter during typhus epidemic.
In the field of child care, JDC not only provided emergency aid to thousands but helped to establish organizations which would take over the primary responsibility for this aid, supported by JDC so long as they needed it. Here are a group of youngsters at a home operated by CENTOS, the Federation of Orphans' Care Societies in Poland.
A separate project was the organization of the American Jewish Joint Agricultural Corporation (Agro-Joint), on behalf of Jews in the Soviet Union, with a varied program designed to help Jews in Russia become self-supporting. Agro-Joint, though it organized a large reconstruction program, including vocational training and loan funds for artisans, workshops and cooperatives, achieved greatest success in helping thousands of Jews settle on the land in Crimea and the Ukraine.
After a dozen years of operation, there were 215 Agro-Joint colonies, with 100,000 persons, engaged in farming. From 1924 to 1938, Agro-Joint provided some $16,000,000 for its activities.

1925
The economic crisis which swept Poland and other areas in 1925 and 1926 forced JDC, which had begun to consider liquidating its operations, instead to expand its efforts, to reinforce and strengthen existing communal agencies. Thousands of children from needy homes were given summer vacations, like this group in Hungary.
Men and women were given relief aid, were provided through the loan kassas with reconstruction loans, and were employed in JDC-subsidized factories and workshops like this one in Galicia.
JDC's aid provided the basis for Jewish economic survival. JDC's expenditures during this period of economic crisis totalled $18,991,000. Though JDC's aid was furnished through local organizations, all of East European Jewry knew its debt to JDC and the Jews of America.
Never was it forgotten that special and continuing assistance had to be provided for the children. Here a group of children and their mothers are given a brief vacation at a JDC-supported "summer colony" in Lithuania.
Among those perhaps hardest hit by the economic crisis were the Orthodox groups. With JDC aid, special vocational training programs helped to provide a solution. One project was a textile workshop for Orthodox young people in Transylvania.
Particularly close during these years of economic crisis was JDC's assistance to OSE, which operated medical institutions in many parts of Eastern Europe. Shown here is a group of children at an OSE orphanage in Bucharest.
Major advances on the road to recovery were scored through JDC's assistance to ORT (Organization for Rehabilitation through Training), which helped train thousands of workers and young people in new trades.
By the early 1930s JDC’s economic aid program had proven so successful that it appeared as if JDC could soon retire from the field. An orderly liquidation program was, in fact, proposed and budgeted for the years 1932 and 1933. Then came the Nazis.
From the very beginning, the Nazi regime began to destroy the livelihoods of the Jews in Germany. By 1934 small groups of refugees had already begun making their way illegally to neighboring countries. Here a group crosses the French frontier.
Discrimination quickly impoverished the Jewish population. From the beginning of the Nazi rise to power JDC worked closely with local Jewish organizations and was the largest foreign contributor toward their budgets. In 1935 one-fifth of the Jews of Germany received JDC aid; by 1937, one-third. This Berlin family opens a JDC welfare package.
Obviously, however, the only real solution during this period was to move as many Jews as possible out of Germany. Thanks to the concerted efforts of a number of JDC-subsidized organizations, some 85,000 persons emigrated from Germany during the years 1933 to 1939, many setting forth penniless on their new lives. One such group is shown entering Switzerland after a terror-stricken escape across the German border.
Even the luckiest of those who escaped from Germany found themselves living in barracks and temporary shelters, completely dependent upon JDC and other organizations for survival. The escapees were happy to find refuge in this crowded shelter established by the Swiss Jewish community with JDC funds. From 1933 to 1939 JDC spent more than $17,251,-600, most of it for refugee aid.
In 1935 the Nazis had promulgated the Nuremberg Laws. In 1938 the German authorities organized a pogrom which destroyed more than 500 synagogues, desecrated Jewish cemeteries and sent thousands of Jews to concentration camps. Liquidated the same year were JDC-subsidized loan funds which had lent 3,163,500 Reichsmarks. The wearing of the yellow Star of David soon became a familiar sight throughout Nazi-held Europe.
Among those refugees whose story became known to the world were the 907 men, women and children who fled from Germany aboard the liner *St. Louis*. The helpless group spent weeks in the Atlantic and Caribbean areas, seeking entrance into Cuba or Mexico, only to be shunted back to Europe. Finally, as a result of a $500,000 guarantee by JDC, they were admitted into Belgium, The Netherlands and Great Britain.
One attempt to establish a refuge for Jews from Germany was JDC's DORSA—the Dominican Republic Settlement Association. Here, the first settlers to reach the country arrive at Sosua on May 7, 1940; hundreds followed in later years.
Dear Friends:

I have long known of the distinguished record of your organization for widespread humanitarian service in behalf of the victims of war and persecution in many lands overseas. Because I know that millions of men, women and little children look to you for rescue, for food, for refuge and asylum, and for succor from their overwhelming burdens, I am glad to convey to the extraordinary meeting of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee my best wishes for the success of its endeavors.

Your cause is the cause of all Americans for democracy must begin with man's humanity to man. Through the activities of your organization and other American agencies of mercy, dignity, self-respect and hope for a better order of things have been restored to millions of men and women. They have been reminded that they are not alone in their travail and suffering; that free men and women of good will hope for their liberation and in the meantime are ready to come to their assistance.

Very sincerely yours,

The White House
Washington
February 15, 1941

Messrs. Paul Saerwald, Chairman,
Edward M. Warburg, Co-Chairman,
The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Inc.,
100 East 42nd Street,
New York, N.Y.

Just as recognition had been given to JDC's efforts in its earliest days by President Woodrow Wilson, so another American president expressed his appreciation of JDC's efforts in 1941. Even during the early days of the war JDC had been able to render direct aid to Jews in Eastern Europe. In 1940, 600,000 Jews in more than 400 localities in Poland alone received JDC aid.
From the very beginning, the Nazis embarked upon the systematic starvation of Polish Jewry. In 1941, JDC helped Jewish agencies to open more than 2,000 institutions in Poland, including 650 feeding stations. This aid was shut off by the Germans following Pearl Harbor. In the Warsaw Ghetto, a group of Jewish physicians decided in 1942 to record the effects of starvation. This definitive clinical study was published by JDC in Warsaw in 1946 under the name of "Maladie de Famine," and has achieved world renown. Here one of the doctors holds up an infant starved to death.
Every emigration and rescue scheme, however fantastic, was explored by JDC during the war years. When the Nazis took Paris, JDC moved its European headquarters to Lisbon, Portugal, which served till the end of the war as an "escape hatch." To aid in the emigration of those who managed to escape from Nazi-held Europe, JDC assumed the full burden of transportation and emigration costs for the refugees, helped more than 80,000 persons to emigrate from Europe between 1939 and 1944. Here refugees wait outside JDC office in Lisbon.
ACHTUNG!!!

Betr.: Freiwilliges Zustellen zu den Transporten.

Im eigenen Interesse der Gettobevölkerung rate ich, sich weiter freiwillig zu den Transporten zu melden, damit Zwangsmassnahmen vermeiden werden können.

Die Freiwilligen haben sich

Im Zentralgefängnis und
In der Schneidergasse 3 (Krawiecka)
zu stellen.


(-) Ch. Rumkowski

Der Ratee der Juden in Litzmannstadt

For the Nazis, the extermination of East European Jewry by starvation was too slow. There began the deportations to the concentration camps and the crematory ovens. Bottom, a notice ordering the Jews of the Lodz Ghetto to report "voluntarily" for the transport. Top, jibing Nazis force an elderly Jew to pray over the bodies of the slaughtered.
JDC representatives entered the war areas in Europe close upon the heels of the liberating Allied armies. JDC threw its entire strength into a mighty effort to keep the survivors alive. More than 225,000,000 pounds of food, clothing, medical supplies and other commodities were shipped from the U. S. alone.
The road back to what was left of “home” . . . the vain search for a wife, a mother, a brother, a son, the joy at surviving turning into bitter frustration . . . no place to go . . . a new word: “DP”. In 1946 JDC provided aid of all kinds to nearly 750,000 men, women and children in Europe.
By 1947, there were 250,000 Jews in the DP camps. JDC provided 224,000 rations daily, built up extensive health services, created educational and recreational facilities. In Germany JDC printed more than 500,000 books, including an 18-volume edition of the Talmud, supported 67 schools, 47 kindergartens, 75 chederim and Talmud Torahs, tried to keep morale high, prepare the DP's for a productive future.
For the Jews of Moslem areas, the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 meant great joy and the fulfillment of a dream. But it also meant a wave of anti-Jewish violence. Here the survivors of a pogrom at Oujda, Morocco, dig graves for the victims of violence. By the end of the year JDC had initiated an extensive program of relief in this area for 100,000, mostly children.
But to the DP’s, the establishment of Israel meant the opening of the gates. This was literally true on the island of Cyprus, where the British had interned some 50,000 Jews who had made unsuccessful attempts to reach Palestine. Here, the last internees leave Cyprus in 1949.
For the DP’s in other countries of Europe too, “life” meant a new beginning in a new land. Before the close of 1950 JDC had aided more than 384,700 to depart from Europe, the vast majority—some 305,000—to Israel, some 41,500 to the United States, and nearly 39,000 to other countries.
By 1951, in Moslem countries JDC was providing medical care for 43,000 monthly, feeding 26,000 children daily, giving educational aid to some 60,000 youngsters. Tens of thousands of others, however, like this family in the Tunis _hara_, or ghetto, still needed aid.
Among the newcomers to Israel there was one especially pathetic group—the so-called "hard core." To care for those who were without relatives and friends, JDC joined in establishing Malben, set up a network of 100 old-age homes, hospitals, sanitaria, custodial care centers, sheltered workshops and other installations throughout the Jewish state.
On January 22nd, 1953, JDC ended its operations in Hungary, the last East European country in which it was operating. At the peak of its post-war activities in Poland, Rumania, Czecho­slovakia, Bulgaria and Hungary, JDC’s beneficiaries numbered more than 410,000. JDC’s total expenditures in these five countries after World War II amounted to more than $85,000,000. Above, youngsters in a JDC-supported orphanage in Eastern Europe.
Though 35,000 were still receiving aid in Europe, there were heartening signs of progress there. For Jews in Moslem countries, however, the battle against poverty, sickness, ignorance and discrimination was far from won. More than 85,000, mostly children, required JDC aid.
In 1954, long after the peak of post-war needs had passed, JDC aid was still vital for more than 150,000 men, women and children. Among them were some 35,000 aged, ill and handicapped newcomers to Israel who were being aided through *Malben*, JDC's welfare program in Israel. Shown here is a crippled newcomer in an occupational therapy workshop.
It would be no more than fitting if on this page you inserted a picture of yourself. Every program which JDC has undertaken, every gain it has scored in its 40-year mission of mercy, has been made possible only because of the support which you and others in the American Jewish community have so wholeheartedly given. In this book you have seen yesterday's milestones. Tomorrow's will be erected by the aid—through the United Jewish Appeal—which you will continue to give.