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Joint Distribution Committee, 1942.

The J.D.C. Digest

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 100 E. 42nd Street, New York

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May, 1942

¶ Follow the far-flung operations of the J.D.C. in this account by its European Chairman

Lisbon Diary—1942

BY DR. JOSEPH J. SCHWARTZ

Chairman, J.D.C. European Executive Council

FEB. 12—Received word the *Serpa Pinto* has debarked the 152 Polish Jewish refugees at Jamaica, British West Indies. Called Mr. B. at the British Embassy, who asked if I remembered today was Lincoln's Birthday. Now that the *Serpa Pinto* is safely across, it feels like a double holiday. Agree with New York its arrangement with the Polish and British governments to transfer these refugees was imperative. Our guarantee to maintain them in Jamaica for a year is a small price to pay for their rescue from danger.

Feb. 16—The connection went bad for a while today on my call to New York. Don't know why. Told them that I had arranged sailings for the *Guine* and the *Serpa Pinto* next month to evacuate another thousand refugees. New York said they would apply immediately for U.S. Treasury licenses for \$400,000.

Relayed the news from Spain. The refugee situation there is desperate. The Luxembourg group, 120 of them, still stranded. They've been there since October. Maintenance costs terribly high—but how can we desert these people?

Feb. 17—Called Marseille to be ready to ship 500 visa-holders across the Med-



iterranean to Casablanca in time for the March 15th sailing.

Feb. 26—Some notes just before going on the overseas phone: Remember to ask when the matzoth for Portugal are due, and whether New York can see their way clear to increase allocations for refugees here. Living costs have risen.

It's lovely today. Real beach weather—but I haven't been near the beach for months—unless you count going to the docks to see the boats off.

March 5—Good news today. New York says copies of advisory approvals are sent out daily from Washington for American visas for refugees. Told them American consuls are renewing expired visas of refugees in Vigo, Barcelona and Madrid. Seems miraculous that, even after America is in the war, we can continue emigration.

March 9—Saw a member of the International Police today. He told me that the J.D.C. has the respect of the Portuguese government because we have kept our word about not letting the refugees become public charges.

March 12—Talked to New York yesterday and today. Still trying to arrange for the *Guine* to stop over at Ca-

diz to pick up some American visa-holders who can't come to Portugal.

March 16—The *Guine* left this morning and will stop over at Cadiz. Fifty-eight of the Luxembourg group will board her there. She is carrying 400 refugees to Latin America and the U. S.

Cabled New York, Barlas [Chaim Barlas, representative of the Jewish Agency in Turkey] needs \$10,000 to pay for the transportation of 200 refugees from Turkey to Palestine. The first 80 are ready to sail immediately.

March 19—Saw Dr. Joy of the Unitarians today. His organization [the Unitarian Service Committee] is grateful for our financial support so that it can go on working in France, particularly in the internment camps. The Unitarians are doing a fine job in the camps and the clinics. So, for that matter, are the Quakers, for refugee and for French children. Both organizations prove that with good will and persistence, even modest sums can do great work.

Every American and Englishman in Lisbon is tremendously excited over the news that MacArthur is in Australia. Hope this means that the tide of battle will turn in our favor soon.

March 23—Cabled New York re French budget. The monthly allotments of \$60,000 have always had to be stretched pretty far to cover all the refugee needs. But now that a new order has been passed segregating all refugees who entered France after 1936 into restricted areas, at least an additional \$15,000 a month will be needed.

April 1—Put all worries behind me at the seder tonight in the community kitchen. Everybody relished the matzoth the J.D.C. shipped from America.

After the seder I walked back to the hotel. Found a cable that New York had remitted \$4,000 to Jewish Agency in Jerusalem to cover the first 80 people whom Barlas has ready to leave.

\$3,320,000 Appropriated, January-May

Appropriations approved during May bring the total commitments of the J.D.C. for the first five months of 1942 to \$3,320,000.

Actual cash expenditures up to May 20 amount to \$2,515,000.

April 7—Phoned New York to complete the arrangements for two more sailings of neutral boats during April and May which will evacuate another 1,200 people. That will bring to 5,000 the number of refugees helped by J.D.C. to emigrate since Pearl Harbor.

New York is increasing the French budget to \$75,000 beginning with April.

April 15—The news about Laval came through today. His return to power casts a lengthening shadow over the Jews of France. Am eager to go to Marseille to inspect the work of our French office, but don't dare leave Lisbon until the boats get under way.

April 27—Hear they are going to have gasoline rationing in the States. Funny how precious a gallon of gas can be. When we were evacuating our office from Paris in June, 1940, I didn't think there was any price too high for gas.

Talked with Switzerland. The news they receive from Poland is incredibly bad — conditions horrible, mortality frightening. The one consolation is the knowledge that the local committees are carrying on, doing what they can to relieve suffering.

May 1—More Polish refugees are filtering into India, some having traveled thousands of miles in flight. New York must now provide fare for those with visas for Western Hemisphere.

Every time I look at the world map in the office, it seems to get bigger. Jewish distress knows no boundaries.

¶ While in Lisbon, Dr. Chaim Weizmann and Dr. Abba Hillel Silver saw J.D.C. in action

Zionist Leaders Appraise J.D.C.

TWO world-renowned Zionist leaders, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, President of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, and Dr. Abba Hillel Silver, Chairman of the United Palestine Appeal, saw the J.D.C. in action in Lisbon recently.

In public statements to American Jews, both Dr. Weizmann and Dr. Silver commented on J.D.C. work. In a radio address under the auspices of the United Jewish Appeal on May 14, Dr. Weizmann said:

"During the time I spent in Lisbon waiting for a Clipper to take me to the United States, I had an excellent opportunity to observe at first hand the relief activities of the Joint Distribution Committee. I came to admire the zeal and devotion with which Dr. Joseph J. Schwartz, the European Chairman of the J.D.C., and his colleague, Emanuel Rosen, carried on their work. The experience which the J.D.C. has accumulated since its establishment twenty-seven years ago has enabled this agency to carry on war relief activities today in widely scattered sections of the globe.

"Last year alone, 930,000 people in 52 countries on 5 continents were helped directly by the Joint Distribution Committee. This year, at least as many are being assisted. In collaboration with the Polish Government-in-Exile, the J.D.C. has assumed a responsibility for aid to 2,000,000 Polish refugees in Russia. 600,000 of these are Jewish. The J.D.C. continues to operate directly in behalf of tens of thousands of refugees in such neutral European countries as unoccupied France, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, Sweden, Turkey.

"In the free Western Hemisphere, the J.D.C. is bringing help to 115,000 refugees from Hitlerism who have found asylum in Latin America.

"Despite the fact that America is at war, the work of emigrating refugees from

Europe continues. While I was in Lisbon, in addition to earlier boats, contracts were signed for two boat sailings for the rescue of 1,200 persons who had been anxiously waiting to escape to a haven overseas. As I spoke to some of the prospective passengers, I was profoundly moved by the happiness which shone from their faces.

"During the first World War, the Joint Distribution Committee concentrated its efforts in the war zone only; today, its arms also reach out to embrace the places to which refugees from oppression have fled. During the first World War, the Joint Distribution Committee had good will and intelligence and energy but lacked experience; today, it has all of those things plus the invaluable asset of 27 years of background and training in the work.

"Undoubtedly the far-flung system of relief and rehabilitation built up by the Joint Distribution Committee in many parts of the world, which represents a splendid humanitarian service, will be of valuable help in any post-war reconstruction effort."

In a nationally syndicated article shortly after his return to the U.S. from London, Dr. Silver wrote:

"While in Lisbon, I had the opportunity to observe the work of the Joint Distribution Committee. . . . They are doing a perfectly magnificent job in caring for the refugees, in looking after them during their stay in Portugal, and in arranging for their transportation to other countries.

"The J.D.C. still has a very important job to do in Europe. There are hundreds of refugees at the present time who hold visas to the United States and other lands for whom transportation arrangement is now being made. . . .

"The J.D.C. is still maintaining a full program of assistance in Unoccupied France with its twenty thousand interned Jews, and many thousands more who are in need of help in Switzerland, Spain, Casablanca, Turkey, Tangiers and Algeria."

¶ The J.D.C. has spent over \$4,400,000 to aid Jewish education and religious culture

Give the Future a Meaning

BY DR. BERNHARD KAHN

*Honorary Chairman, J.D.C. European Executive Council,
Member, J.D.C. Cultural Committee*

WHEN life itself is at stake, some of life's adjuncts are easy to overlook. There is so much more dramatic value in that part of the J.D.C.'s program which is devoted to the actual saving of life that many people believe it to be the J.D.C.'s sole function.

Such is not the case. True, the J.D.C. saves lives, ameliorates suffering, acts as a great and good messenger of mercy. But not once, since it was founded over 27 years ago, has the J.D.C. neglected its responsibilities to the spirit as well as to the body of man. In innumerable ways it has supported a broad cultural platform, through the establishment and support of all types of educational and religious institutions.

Since 1920, that part of the J.D.C.'s world-wide program of aid has been centered in its Cultural Committee, comprising representatives of the three major organizations which originally founded the J.D.C.—the American Jewish Relief Committee, the Central Relief Committee and the People's Relief Committee. Until his death two years ago, Dr. Cyrus Adler, out of his great fund of wisdom and devotion to Jewish lore, directed the activities of the Cultural Committee as Chairman.

The very first task of the Cultural Committee was of gigantic proportions. It revitalized the entire Jewish educational system of Eastern Europe, which had broken down after the last war. It created, restored and maintained in

Europe almost 1,800 educational institutions, ranging from elementary schools to yeshivoth, seminaries and academies of learning, with a total attendance of 225,000 students.

Not only did Cultural Committee funds supply religious and secular books, but in addition it enabled the institutions to do many concrete, material things which were essential for the continuation of their work. Schoolhouses were built, others repaired and modernized, new classrooms were built and school grounds improved, sanitary equipment was installed. The schools were enabled to provide recreational opportunities, to maintain penniless students.

Since the J.D.C. was founded it has spent well over \$4,400,000 to rescue, support and encourage Jewish educational and cultural institutions abroad. Over and above this sum, earmarked specifically for cultural work, the J.D.C. has, of course, given substantial assistance to other writers, teachers and students as part of its general work.

A recent instance will suffice to illustrate this point. Since the inception of the present war the J.D.C. has provided very large sums for the support and evacuation from the war zones of about 1,000 Polish rabbis, teachers and yeshiva students. These persons fled from Poland to Lithuania shortly after the German invasion of Poland, were supported by the J.D.C. in Lithuania for more than a year, and were then

evacuated to the Far East. A substantial number were later able to leave for the Western Hemisphere and Palestine.

With increased refugee aid and integration activities in Latin America, the J.D.C. is also supplying funds, through the Cultural Committee, for assistance to growing Jewish communities in order that they may establish Jewish centers and create facilities for Jewish education of youth. To religious institutions in Latin America, the J.D.C. has shipped articles of various kinds: Torahs, prayer books, Haggadahs, Tfilim, Mezuzoth and many other items.

Scanning the list of more than 100 institutions presently being supported by the Cultural Committee, one is immediately struck by the fact that more than two-thirds are in Palestine. Some 65 institutions, ranging from the Hebrew University to the Ohel Jacob Kinder-



garten, the Yeshiva Beth Joseph Zvi, the Poale Agudas Israel Labor Organization, receive regular grants.

While the relief arm of the J.D.C. is striving to make the future a reality for victims of war and persecution, the arm which fosters Jewish culture is attempting to give that future a meaning.

Lost and Found

DAVE MANDELBERG of the Bronx, N. Y., is a happy man today. Thanks to the J.D.C., he has had word from his sister's son and daughter, whom he had not heard from in four years.

On May 13th a cable arrived in the office of the Joint Distribution Committee. It came from Yakutsk, Siberia—a small city in the easternmost part of the Soviet Union—about 1400 miles north of Vladivostok. It was signed by Marie Flachs, who asked the J.D.C. to search for Mr. Mandelberg (no address given) and inform him that she, her brother, her husband and children were in Siberia as refugees from Poland.

The J.D.C. acted quickly. The next day, all of the Yiddish newspapers in New York carried the message, and the following morning Mr. Mandelberg called at the J.D.C. office. He promptly cabled to his niece and is arranging to send her food packages.

"He, Too, Fell in Battle"

THE cable from Lisbon to the J.D.C. stated simply, "Regret advise Dr. Julius L. Seligsohn, President of Hilfsverein, passed away in German concentration camp."

When the J.D.C. announced his death, Dr. Seligsohn's life was summed up in the following editorial tribute, "He, Too, Fell in Battle," in *The New York Times*:

"Dr. Julius L. Seligsohn, news of whose death has just been received in this country, did not fall as a soldier does in the anesthetizing excitement of battle. He did not die once, but daily, over many months. He is one name out of the many nameless who gave up their lives like heroes in the German concentration camps. A patent lawyer, internationally known, he had served his country—Germany—during the First World War. Moved by pity for the hardships of the less fortunate, he had been active in the Jewish charities. In the fall of 1940 he proclaimed a fast day for all the Jews of Germany when their people were expelled from Baden and the Palatinate. Hitler was offended. Dr. Seligsohn was delivered to the Gestapo.

"When the war is over and the United Nations erect their memorials to the brave fliers, the sailors who fired their guns as their ships were sinking, the soldiers who fell in the front of battle, there will be monuments also for men like Julius Seligsohn."

¶ Despite persecution and poverty, Polish Jews manage to retain their human dignity

Life Goes On in the Ghettos

By JOSEPH C. HYMAN
Executive Vice-Chairman, J.D.C.

TALES of Jewish suffering in the occupied lands of Europe are by now commonplace. They are difficult for Americans to understand; free men do not readily grasp such depths of brutality. Even harder to understand is the fact that, *despite Hitlerism*, the inhabitants of occupied lands continue to live. Even in Poland, Jewish life goes on.

Over 60% of the 2,000,000 Jews in occupied Poland live in eleven larger ghettos. We understand what a vicious, long-term quarantine is implied in the word "ghetto." Yet, Polish Jews are heroically resisting poverty, persecution and social ostracism.

For a quarter century the Joint Distribution Committee helped to alleviate their distress, spending \$30,000,000 for relief and reconstruction work until the beginning of this war. Today the only channels for health and social welfare programs in Poland are institutions built up by the J.D.C.: the Toz (federation of health societies); the Centos (a federation of child-care institutions); the Jewish schools, the yeshivoh and other cultural institutions; the cooperatives and free loan societies.

Meanwhile how do these people live? Here are a few indications:

Large numbers of Jews are forced to do compulsory labor for the Nazis—road building, road blasting, building of fortifications, work in factories and mines, clearing snow off streets.

When the Warsaw ghetto walls were completed, all "Aryans" left; Jews be-

came watchmen, house workers, street cleaners, policemen. Others engage in small trading—little more than barter.

In some cities, workers' cooperatives have been organized for tailors, shoemakers, hosiery-producers, carpenters cap-makers, glove-makers. The German Labor Office supplies the cooperatives with raw materials. All members are punished severely if the order is not filled satisfactorily or on time.

Probably the most heartening news to come out of Warsaw are the reports of an active, developing cultural life.

A cause of great despair was the fact that the children were not being given an education. Jewish schools were used as soup kitchens; children were growing up like vagabonds. For a long time secret classes were held in children's feeding centers, but this was hardly satisfactory. Recently, the Jewish elementary schools of Warsaw were reopened. No greater joy could have been felt in Warsaw than on that day.

There are many other evidences of cultural virility. Four Jewish theatres have reopened, giving jobs to hundreds and an escape from tragic reality to thousands. Art exhibits were arranged. The youth choir was reorganized. In a city that has witnessed countless book burnings, 24 Yiddish book stores and libraries obtained permits to operate.

Despite Nazi propaganda, a solidarity exists between Poles and Jews. It is not unusual to read of Polish traders being shot for giving food to Jews.

¶ The J.D.C. family of officers gives another member to the U.S.: Lt. Col. M. C. Troper

No Greater Cause

AS war-time America reaches into all fields of endeavor to draw upon brain- and man-power, many gaps are perforce left in civilian ranks. The J.D.C. family has given several important members to the country's service.

Edward M. M. Warburg, Chairman of the J.D.C., in February enlisted as a private in the Army (*J.D.C. Digest*, April). He has now been joined in the armed services by Morris C. Troper, for three years the Chairman of the J.D.C.'s European Executive Council.

Mr. Troper is stationed in Washington. He resigned his administrative post with the J.D.C. to accept the commission of Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Army and is serving as chief of the Cost Analysis Division of the Services of Supply of the War Department. He still maintains his interest in and affiliation with the J.D.C. as a member of its Board and Executive Committee.

Before coming to the J.D.C., Lt. Col. Troper achieved high honor in the field of accountancy. For thirteen years, from 1926 through 1939, he was Director of the New York State Society of Certified Public Accountants, and for a time was its President.

Lt. Col. Troper's direction of the J.D.C.'s European program reflected his unique personality. Energetic, calm and good humored in the face of the most trying situations, possessed of a keen eye for the human as well as technical aspects of his work, he set a high standard in American relief activities overseas.

Possessed of a knack for encountering adventure, Lt. Col. Troper was in Berlin on November 10, 1938, when all Germany erupted in violent anti-Jewish pogroms. The day that Italy entered the war found him in Rome. He stuck to his post in Paris until the day before the Germans marched in. At Bordeaux, he and the thousands of other people waiting at the railroad station were attacked by German dive bombers.

Lt. Col. Troper regards his entrance into the Army as eminently logical. "I had a first-row seat in watching the events on the other side," he points out. "It does not require more than the experience of Nazi dive-bombers swooping down on that station in Bordeaux, machine-gunning and hurling explosives in the midst of women and children, to crystallize a man's sentiments.

"Unfortunately, it is not in our power to breathe life back into the shattered bodies of those who have fallen victim to the forces of evil. But the armed might of the United Nations can prevent a repetition of so unnecessary a tragedy, and such agencies of mercy as the Joint Distribution Committee can do much to alleviate suffering among the victims and their survivors."

Lt. Col. Troper, Pvt. Warburg and others who are in Government service as officers or civilians, will be greatly missed in the councils of the J.D.C. But there is this consolation: they can be serving no greater cause.

[The next issue of J.D.C. DIGEST will carry a roster of Board members serving America.]



From Coast to Coast

EAGER to hear first-hand reports of the effects of Nazi domination upon the Jews of Europe and the mitigating measures taken by the J.D.C., community leaders from 244 cities flocked to thirteen J.D.C. regional meetings during April and May. The speakers were S. Bertrand Jacobson and Herbert Katzki, members of the J.D.C.'s overseas staff.

On April 6, 9 and 10, three Southern communities heard Mr. Jacobson. The first meeting, in Shreveport, La., was called by Sidney L. Herold, J.D.C. Board member and a Vice-Chairman of the Southwestern Region. The second, in Birmingham, was called by William P. Engel, Alabama State Chairman. The third gathering was held in Mobile, Ala., under the leadership of Rabbi Sidney M. Berkowitz.

Maine was the scene of three more meetings at which Mr. Jacobson spoke. On April 13, leaders from Lewiston-Auburn and neighboring communities met in the former city at a conference organized by Philip W. Lown, First Vice-President of the Maine Jewish Committee. On the following day Bangor discussed J.D.C. work at a meeting called by Myer Segal, J.D.C. Zone Chairman for Maine and Second Vice-President of the Maine Jewish Committee. On the 15th Israel Bernstein, State Chairman for Maine and President of the Maine Jewish Committee, convened the Portland Zone in that city.



COMING down to New York State, Mr. Jacobson addressed meetings in Syracuse and Buffalo. The former meeting, on April 19, brought leaders from Utica and Binghamton Zones at the behest of H. Hiram Weisberg, Regional Chairman for New York. The Buffalo meeting, called a week later by Eugene Warner, J.D.C. Board member and a Vice-Chairman of the New York Region, also embraced the important Rochester Zone.

Mr. Jacobson also spoke at the Temple Emanuel in Davenport, Iowa, on the 24th, at a special service arranged by Rabbi Abram Vossen Goodman.

On the last two days of the month Herbert Katzki visited Minnesota. He spoke to large audiences in Duluth, on the 29th, and in Virginia on the 30th.

During May Mr. Jacobson visited two more communities, Paterson, N. J., and Toledo, O. The former meeting, on the 12th, was organized by Philip Dimond, Zone Chairman, with the cooperation of the following Associated Zone Chairmen: Mendon Morrill of Paterson, Senator Oscar S. Wilensky of Passaic, Howard Mack of Hackensack, Harry L. Schwarz of Dover, Charles Fishberg of Englewood and Alexander Puritz of Ridgewood. The conference in Toledo, held on the 20th of May, was convened by J. Eugene Farber, Zone Chairman, and Harry Levison, Vice-Chairman of the Ohio Region.



IN a recent address in behalf of J.D.C., Milton K. Susman, prominent Pittsburgh attorney and lecturer on world affairs, said

"It has been pretty well established that everybody in America has a job to do to help win the war. Equally immediate is the job of winning the peace. Now, of course, winning the peace seems almost too huge a task. It is. That's why our work in behalf of European Jews is of such overall importance. We are fighting for democracy and enlightenment, but you cannot democratize and enlighten the inhabitants of a cemetery. Our job is to keep the small people of Europe, the opponents and victims of Nazism, out of the cemetery.

"'When there is no vision, the people perish,' Solomon warned. We may well be grateful for the vision of American Jews as it has expressed itself in the Joint Distribution Committee—the vision which led 27 years ago to the creation of so magnificent an instrument of mercy. Unless our generation has the vision to sustain this lifeline of help across the sea, the people will indeed perish—and with them will perish one of our hopes for the world of tomorrow."

[The J.D.C. receives its income from the United Jewish Appeal]